Silver Jubilee Publication Series-9

SANSKRIT DRAMA IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

S.S. JANAKI

RASHTRIYA SANSKRIT SANSTHAN

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IN
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Bhawan's Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya ★ Bharatiya Vidya
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S. S. Janaki

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FOREWARD

I have great pleasure to present this volume of Silver Jubilee Publication Series of the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan to our esteemed readers. The Volume varily represents the goodwill and cooperation, the Sansthan has all along been receiving from the distinguished scholars all over the country.

The Sansthan was established in October, 1970 as an autonomous apex body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India with a view to promoting, preserving and propagating Sanskrit learning in all its aspects, with special reference to the indepth shastraic learning. Apart from conducting the regular courses of studies at the various constituent Vidyapeethas, it has been bringing out invaluable publications representing dissemination of knowledge contained in the Shastras.

Thanks to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India for their continued help, encouragement and support, due to which the Sansthan has grown by leaps and bounds and has been able to render its services for promotion of Sanskrit learning at national and international levels and is now completing its 25th year. It is quite in the fitness of things that the Sansthan decided to bring out 25 scholarly monographs in commomeration of the Silver Jubilee year of the Sansthan.

This monograph entitled **Sanskrit Drama in Theory and Practice**, brilliantly highlights the effect and relevance of the tradition of Natya-Shastra on contemporary theatre in India and abroad. It's authoress **Dr. S.S. Janaki**, former Director, Kuppuswami Shastri Research Institute, Madras is a renowned scholar of Sanskrit and she was associated as Secretary with 'Sanskrit Rang' Madras for long time. I am sincerely thankful to her for sparing valuable time and energy to contribute this brilliant piece of work for the Silver Jubilee Publication Series of Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan.

I t is my duty to mention the services rendered by my colleagues especially Dr. Savita Pathak and Dr. R.Devanathan for organising the various academic programmes particularly the publication of the Silver Jubilee Series. M/s. Amar Printing Press also deserves our thanks for bringing out this monograph in time at a very short notice enabling us to release the same on the Valedictory function of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations.

(K.K. Mishra)
Director
Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan
New Delhi

Dated 10.10.1995

INTRODUCTION

The variety, development and continuity of the Sanskrit Drama in theory and practice during the last 2000 years is quite remarkable. Material on the subject is available in the dramaturgical treatises, dramas themselves and their commentaries. Much has also been written in India and abroad on the subject in different perspectives.

The present monograph deals adequately with the uniqueness of Sanskrit drama tradition and its relevance to contemoporary theatre in India and outside. In this connection, the form and contents of some drama-types, and the production technique as available in some theoretical treatises and dramas themselves, are highilghted.

23 Sept. 1995
Madras.

S.S. Janaki

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SANSKRIT DRAMA IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

The Sanskrit Drama represents not only the most ancient stage of India, but as has been observed, between the Greek Drama and the Renaissance, it was the only theatre of the world which was both flourishing and distinguished. As H.H. Wilson observes in his 'Theatre of the Hindus', when in the 14th-15th centuries European drama emerged, Sanskrit drama had already passed its stage of perfection.

Dramatic elements in the Vedic Period

Dance, Music, Dialogue etc. which are all integral components of Drama are already in the Vedas. Evidences for this are to be found scattered in the Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Sūtras.

The Ṛg Veda has many dialogue hymns which are highly poetic and imaginative, all of which can be regarded as precursors of the later classical dramas. Some of these from the Ṛg Veda are the dialogues between Viśvāmitra and the rivers (III.33), Indra, Maruts and Agastya (I.165 and 170), Gods and Agni (X.,51-53) and Saramā and the Pāṇis (X.108). Ṛg X.119 is a monologue in which the poet fancies that Indra being intoxicated with some offerings, muses to himself. Similarly Ṛk I.24 is a soliloquy of Sunaḥśepa whose story is developed in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.

In the Vedic ritual[1] there were the Brahmodyas (questions and answers) as in Vājasaneyī Samhitā (23. 9-12 and 45-62) explained in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 2.6.9-17 and XIII. 5.2. 12-21). These rituals consisted also of several incidents that partook of the nature of drama. In Mahāvrata for example, there is a mock fight between a brāhmaṇa and a śūdra for a white circular skin that symbolises the sun, and it is so arranged that it ends in a victory for the ārya. In the same rite there was beating of drums, chanting of hymns by the priests whose wives followed them as choristers and played on several instruments, and servants and maids danced with water jars on their heads and sang songs in which cows were lauded. In the Aśvamedha, after the horse was sacrificed there was an exchange of obscene abuse between the hotṛ priest and the crowned queen and the brahmā priest and the favourite of the king. It is clear that even the earlier period of Vedic literature knew dramatic spectacles of a religious character. Historians of Indian Drama have therefore held that Indian (Sanskrit) Drama had a native origin, a ritual origin.

Highlights of Sanskrit Drama in Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra (Chap. I)

The Nāṭya Sāstra (N.Ś.) compiled by the sage Bharata is well known as providing the basis for the structural and representational aspects of the different types of dances and dramas prevalent in all parts of India, in theory and practice, for nearly two thousand years. It is common knowledge also that the N.Ś. is mainly concerned with the technique and formulation of the composition, representation on the stage and enjoyment of the dramatic shows called Nāṭaka, Dṛśya or Rūpaka. It is noteworthy that the work itself is calledNāṭyaśāstra while in the body of the test the names like 'Nāṭya Veda', 'Nāṭya Yajña' and 'Nāṭya Yoga' are found. The N.Ś. shows its consciousness that the classical Sanskrit Drama has its roots deep in the Vedic age.

---

[1] P.V. Kane, History of Dharma Sastra, Vol.II. pp. 1234-35, 1244-45.

In the close of the first chapter of N.Ś. there is a detailed exposition (I. 105-19 G.O.S.IInd ed.) of the scope, contents, origin, objective and people qualified to undertake the study, practice and appreciation of Nāṭya. This detailed description is necessitated by a set of searching questions put to Bharata by the great sages led by Ātreya. Bharata replies them that the Nāṭya Veda was created by Brahmā at the request of Indra and other gods. This happened in days of yore when the Svāyambhuva Manvantara of the Kṛta Yoga was over and the Tretā Yuga and the attendent Vaivasvata Manvantara had set in. At that time the Jambu Dvīpa was ruled over by the Lokapālas and filled with people overpowered by passion, jealousy, anger and other vices. It was at this point of time and under such circumstances that Indra, intolerant of the evil ways of life, requested Brahmā 'to produce a two-dimensional pleasurable entertainment that will provide a feast for the eye and the ear (krīḍanīyakam icchāmo dṛśyam śravyam ca yad bhavet)". Indra adds that this ought to be 'a fifth Veda, easily accessible to all caste-categories of peoples'. It was then that Brahmā created the Nāṭya Veda as the fifth Veda taking the recitative element (pāṭhya) from the Ṛgveda, music form the Sāma Veda, gestures from Yajur Veda and Rasa from Atharva Veda. This Nāṭya Veda is associated with not only the principal four Vedas as mentioned above, but also with Upavedas (like Āyur Veda and Gāndharva Veda, N.Ś.I.8-18).

Before going to more details of the Nātya Veda in the same chapter, we may pause here for a while to note a couple of interesting psychological factors mentioned by Abhinavagupta (A.G.) about the appropriateness of its creation in the Tretā Yuga and Jambudvīpa. According to A.G. (Ibid. p.10 second para; p.11 lines 9-12) a diversion will be required only when a person has occasions to be under alternating spells of joy and suffering. In Kṛta Yuga, people rich in Sattva guṇa, are self-contained in right conduct and behaviour. They are fully imbued in pure joy. In Tretā Yuga, on the other hand, there is the dominance of Rajo guṇa. Under its impulse people are revolting and chaotic. They enjoy and suffer. They crave for enjoyment and dislike grief. To put them in proper moods an entertaining show becomes necessary.

जम्बूद्वीपे कर्मभूमिस्थाने यो लोकः सुखिनः दुःखितश्च
तद्विषयकं क्रीडनीयकम् इच्छामः । * * * तच्च
क्रीडनीयकं सुखितदुःखित एव भवति न ह्येकान्तसुखिते
काले देशे वा क्रीडया किञ्चित् । नाप्येकान्तदुःखिते ।

तेन कृतयुगे कलिप्रान्ते वा इलावृतादिनिवासिनि जने
नारके वा क्रीडोत्पत्तिः ।

Brahmā thus created the Nāṭya Veda comprising the four components of spoken word (Vāk), bodily movement (āṅgika). make-up (āhārya) and emotional involvement (sāttvika). Along with such a Veda containing the technicalities of the above four categories, the itihāsa[1] (or the ten representational types of drama, daśa-rūpa) to make use of such techniques was also produced (I.19).

उत्तपाद्य नाट्यवेदं तु ब्रह्मोवाच सुरेश्वरम् ।
इतिहासो मया सृष्टः * * * * * * * ॥

Explaining 'Itihāsa' in the verse A.G. says that it refers to the ten dramatic types (Itihāsah daśa-rūpakam).

When the problem of staging the drama came up for discussion, Indra himself admits that the gods may not be the fit persons to participate in them. For, they are always given to pleasure and hence not competent to have full involvement in the varied emotional situations and communicate the same to the spectators felicitously (I.22).

ग्रहणे धारणे ज्ञाने प्रयोगे चास्य सत्तम ।
अशक्ता भगवन् देवा अयोग्या नाट्यकर्मणि ॥

Indra also suggests that the hundred or more sage-disciples of Bharata who have an indepth knowledge and understanding of the Vedas and Vedantic texts, who are bodily and mentally disciplined and are spiritually inclined, are the ones qualified to properly understand and retain the essence of the show so as to present and communicate the same ably to the audience (I.23).

---

[1] G.K. Bhat (p.9, Bharata-Nāṭya-mañjarī) has rendered Itihāsa literally as 'historical tales'.

य इमे वेदगुह्यज्ञा ऋषयः संशितव्रताः ।
एतेऽस्य ग्रहणे शक्ताः प्रयोगे धारणे तथा ॥

Then at the instance of Brahmā, Bharata imparts the technical details of the presentation to his sage-disciples and also to apasarases specially created for the purpose. Nārada and other sages were put in charge of music. Before starting the actual presentation Brahmā advises Bharata to offer worship to Indra's banner (Dhvaja). A special stage for the enaction was then created by the divine architect Viśvakarma. The different gods in charge of the extremities (lokapālas) and other divinities of the three worlds were allotted specific positions at the stage for its protection. In spite of all this spiritual safeguarding and preliminary precautions, obstacles under the leadership of Virūpākṣa appear to prevent the presentation of the drama. When gently asked by Brahmā as to why Virūpākṣa was behaving refractorily, he says-- -"Lord, this Nāṭya Veda created by yourself is for bringing the gods in a favourable light. In addition it sets at naught the demons. This is not proper, For, like the gods, the demons too were created by you' (II.103-4).

योऽयं भगवता सृष्टो नाट्यवेदः सुरेच्छया ।
प्रत्यादेशोऽयमस्माकं सुरार्थं भवता कृतः ॥
तन्नैतदेवं कर्तव्यं त्वया लोकपितामह ।
यथा देवास्तथा दैत्यास्त्वत्तस्सर्वे विनिर्गताः ॥

It is at this juncture, as a reply to Virūpākṣa and other demons who were preventing the enaction on the stage that Brahmā gives in detail the objective, content, components and highlights of Nāṭya (I.105-19).

'O faultless demons, you may give up your anger and mental dejection. I have created the Nāṭya Veda in which the various good and bad results accurring from the actions and intentions associated (kaṛmabhāvānvayāpekṣī) with both yourself (demons) and gods will be depicted (105cd-106). However, in this Nāṭya Veda the representation (anubhavana) of the gods and demons is not exclusively as such (naikāntataḥ). For, Nāṭya is the 'anukīrtana' of the Bhāvas in the three worlds (107).

In v.107 'naikāntataḥ', 'anukīrtana' and 'bhāvas' are crucial words and require some comments. 'Bhāva' occurs more than once in Brahmā's address to Virūpākṣa and in other contexts. The other two terms will be dealt with now as in the A.Bh.

According to A.G. outside of the drama, the demons and gods are seen in their own personalities (devāsurasya bahir yathāsvam avasthānam).[1] But in the Nāṭya Veda they are seen and understood exclusively in a particular way. For, between the god and demon as represented in drama, and as in their real life, the relationship is not one of similarity, or illusion, or superim-

---

1. Gnoli's rendering (p. 93, The Aesthetic experience according to Abhinavagupta) of this line as 'both the demons and the gods stay outside at ease' is too literal and off the mark.

position or identity, or poetic fancy, or duplication, or imitation, or magic or tirck.

According to A.G. the word anukīrtana[1] in v. 107 is loaded with significant meanings. This anukīrtana along with 'naikāntataḥ' mentioned in the same N.Ś. verse, brings out the unique relationship between the original characters figuring in the dramatic theme, and their representational substitutes on the stage, as visualised by the cultured critic (sahṛdaya). A.G. goes into great detail on the subtleties of this problem in Chap. I of the N.Ś. (Ibid pp.37-9), and other contexts as well. It appears from A.G.'s remarks that the complexities of this problem were not clearly grasped even by some commentators and dramaturgical writers before A.G. What A.G. himself states in this connection is the idea based on the aesthetic principles postulated by A.G.'s guru in dramaturgical art, namely Bhaṭṭa Tota in his Kāvyakautuka, an important work known only through citations in A.G.'s Locana on the Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana and the Abhinavabhāratī (A.Bh.) on Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra. A few important points from out of the detailed exposition of A.G. may be seen now. They are ---

1. In Nāṭya the critic's disposition is spontaneous and not pre-meditated.
2. The enjoyment that he derives from Nāṭya is manifold.

---

[1] Gnoli (p. 94, Ibid.) renders 'anukīrtana' literally as 're-narration'.

(i) the enchantic music makes him forget his worldly existence.

(ii) at the entrance of the characters made-up (āhārya) as Rāma, Rāvaṇa etc. and on hearing their delivery of speech (pāṭhya), a certain cognition is developed in the spectators; this cognition (samvit) enables him to enjoy the characters as not conditioned by time and space, and in a general way.

(iii) The spectator is elevated mentally and his heart becomes crystal-clear. The grades of gestures ranging from the gross to the subtle (technically called sūcā, aṅkura, śākhā etc.), manifest the different mental states of sorrow, delight etc. These states get easily reflected in the mirror-like heart of the spectator leading to his perfect identification with these moods. All the events and emotional situations appear to him as though they are happening just then.

(iv) This identity of individual situations and attendant emotions reiterate themselves, in and through the whole dramatic show. As a total effect of all this results a unique enjoyment, that lingers in the mind for several days and months.

(v) Accompanying this relish is a generalised flowing feeling to do good and avoid bad things.

(vi) The above entire process or principle is the 'anukīrtana,' to which A.G. gives a

> symonymn 'anuvyavasaya'; both these terms can only be explained as above but are difficult to be rendered into English.
>
> According to A.G. this anukīrtana, or anuvyavasāya-viśeṣa is synonymous with Nāṭya.
>
> तदिदमनुकीर्तनमनुव्यवसायविशेषो नाट्यापरपर्यायः ।[१]

We may now continue, after this excursion into the connotation and implication of 'anukīrtana' and 'naikāntataḥ' in Bharata's text (N.Ś. I.107) the words of Brahmā to Virūpākṣa, the personification of obstacle, on the further characteristics of Nāṭya (N.Ś.I. 108-19)

The elements of virtue (dharma), sport (krīḍā), wealth (artha), quietude (śama), laughter (hāsya), fight (yuddha), love (kāma), and slaughter (vadha) are to be found in Nāṭya (v.108).

A.G. explains the terms dharma etc. in two ways. Firstly each of them refers to the particular drama-type in which these elements are prominent. For example, dharma-element is prominent in Nāṭaka; artha in Prakaraṇa, krīḍā in Bhāṇa etc. Secondly he takes them to refer to the corresponding Sthāyi, Vyabhicāri etc. In this way dharma implies utsāha or enthusiasm, krīḍā refers to amazement (vismaya) etc.

In the following verses 109-11, Brahmā enumerates the different aspects of Natya that provide solace to various categories of people.

---

1. Gnoli (Ibid. p.98) translates this line as - 'this re-narration is a particular re-perception; the word 'drama' is but a synonymn for it'.

Thus, 'the dharmic ideas in Natya are for the enjoyment of righteous minded people, love-incidents for the self-controlled' (v.109)

"It creates boldness in the impotent, enthusiasm in the valorous, an awakening in the unlearned, and (reiterates) the skills of the proficient (110)

It provides entertainment for the kings, steadiness for the suffering, wealth for those intent in material life and courage for the depressed" (111)

Brahmā then continues :---

"The Nāṭya has been created by me to depict all bhāvas and conditions (physical, mental and spiritual), as based on the world (112).

It delineates the deeds of the high,. low and the middling. It gives advice indirectly and in a charming way. It contributes to courage (physical and mental), sportful manners and delight (113)

This Nāṭya will definitely bring about tranquility to the sages afflicted by agony, fatigue and sorrow (114)

The Nāṭya will provide instruction to the worlds on proper dharma, the way to lead a full life, welfare and improvement of one's entellect (115)

There is no branch of knowledge, art, science (or government etc.), fine art, yoga, or activity that does not find a place in Nāṭya (116)".

A.G. explains 'Yoga' as the faculty by which the poet harnesses the different branches of science and arts harmoniously (Ibid p.42)

Brahmā thus concludes his long speech on Nāṭya---

"Therefore you (demons) should not entertain anger towards the gods. This Nāṭya is to be a representation (anukaraṇa) of things in the seven islands (117)

Nāṭya depicts the stories relating to the gods, demons, kings, family men and Brahmarṣis (118)

Whatever is normally prevalent in the world as associated with joy and sorrow, becomes enjoyable in the Nāṭya performed through bodily gestures and other attendent factors (voice, make-up and emotional involvement" (119)

In this manner within a mythical, mythological and rhetorical garb the N.Ś. refers to the unique indigenous features of Sanskrit Drama, its presentation and appreciation.

Early literary evidences : The antiquity and indigenous growth of Sanskrit Drama are clear from the literary evidences as well. By the 5th century B.C. the art of actors had become sufficiently developed, for, the great grammarian Pāṇini informs us that the two authors, Śilālin and Kṛśāśva, had by that time, codified the art into aphoristic texts, the Naṭa sūtras. It is noteworhy that among the synoyns of Naṭa or actor, we have the terms Bharata, Kriśāsva and Śilālin. Patañjali, the grammarian, speaks of many things pertaining to the art - the raṅga or stage, the music, the verses, the actors, the themes of binding Bali and Kamsa and even the concept of rasa or sentiment and emotional reference.

There are may references in epic literature also. References to festivals and joyous gatherings (utsava and samāja) and to actors and dancers (naṭa and nartaka) are found in the Rāmāyaṇa (1.5.12; 2.67.15) and the Mahābharata. The two epics, it may be remembered, have always supplied the themes for Sanskrit plays. In the supplement to the Mahābhārata, called the Harivaṃśa, we have an account of special significance to the production of drama, to the epic source of dramatic material and to the way Drama could be used for political and other purposes. The Harivaṃśa, placed by scholars in the second or third century A.D. shows the performance of drama as part of the entertainment for the people gathered at the horse sacrifice performed by Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā (Viṣṇu Parvan 2.91ff). An actor named Bhadranāman or Bhadra, entertained a gathering of sages with an excellent play and the sages blessed him, saying that any role he played would prove a great success. Now there was at that time a powerful demon-king, Vajranābha, who had a beautiful daughter, Prabhāvatī. The king of gods Indra, wanted to destroy him and planned the marriage of Prabhāvatī to Pradyumna, Kṛṣṇa's son. For this the actor Bhadra was used. With him the Yādavas on Kṛṣṇa's side infiltrate the demon-king's city as a troupe of actors and start playing in a suburb of the city. Bhadra captures the hearts of the demons of Vajranābha's city with his play based on the Rāmāyaṇa story (2.93. 5- 6). Because of his excellent acting, he and his troupe of actors (naṭa) protraying Pradyumna and other Yādava heroes are applauded and presents are showered on them at every step during the performance. King Vajranābha himself then calls the great actor and orders command performances in his presence. Plays based on the stories of the descent of the celestial river Ganges (gaṅgāvataraṇa) and the ravishing of heavenly damsel Rambhā by Rāvaṇa (Rambhābhisāra) are enected by them. They perform other plays as well, which provide occasions for advancing the love affair between Pradyumna and Prabhāvatī. Eventually, the members of the troupe kill Vajranābha, carry Prabhāvatī away to Dvārakā, and celebrate the marraige there.

Daśarūpakas : As mentioned in the Nāṭya Śāstra the first Sanskrit drama grew out of the festival of Indra's Banner and was the imitation of acts of God, of the triumph of the gods over the demons. The N.Ś. itself refers to the first two drama-types, namely, 'the churning of the milky ocean for nector' (Amṛta-mathana) and 'Siva's destruction of the three cities' (Tripuradāha). Ten such large and small dramatic performances were available at the time of Bharata's codification of N.Ś. These were called by him 'the visual' (dṛśya, rūpaka) as opposed to the literary poems that are 'heard' (śravya). As these stage representations comprised of dialogues along with music, dance and abhinaya they were really dance-dramas and hence called also as Nāṭya.

Kālidāsa, the greatest Sanskrit dramatist who strictly followed the classical dramatic modes as prescribed in Bharata's Nāṭya Śāstra (N.Ś.), succinctly gives the characteristics of the stage-representation in a well known verse in his drama Mālvikāgnimitra (I.4).

'Ancient sages (like Bharata) consider Drama as a unique sacrifice in the form of a pleasant spectacle; this has been displayed by Śiva himself in his composite form shared with Umā; the worldly deeds performed in accordance with the triple guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas) appear in Drama in manifold moods; Nāṭya is the one delight for men of diverse tastes' :

देवानामिदमामनन्ति मुनयः कान्तं क्रतुं चाक्षुषं
रुद्रेणेदमुमाकृतव्यतिकरे स्वाङ्गे विभक्तं द्विधा ।
त्रैगुण्योद्भवमत्र लोकचरितं नानारसं दृश्यते
नाट्यं भिन्नरुचेर्जनस्य बहुधाप्येकं समाराधनम् ॥

The ten dramatic performances, with a long or short theme, unity of idea and a specific dominant rasa, proper development of situations and introduction of appropriate characters etc. were called 'daśa-rūpaka' by Bharata. In chap. 18 of N.Ś. (G.O.S.ed.) the highlights of the ten types are given. The difference between one type of drama and another, and between one drama and another of the same type is due to the difference in the theme or itivṛtta, in the rasa, in the vṛtti that is inherently fused with rasa as the atmosphere of the rasa, and in the nature of the hero, heroine and other male and female characters.

Again, the dramas may differ on account of the difference in the way in which they are produced and presented. The Bhāṇa, for example, is to be done by one actor (ekahārya). It is not a monologue but one-man show; in this through the stage convention (nāṭya-dharmī) of ākāśa- bhāṣita (speech in the air) the single actor, by looking up appropriately and pretending to see and hear, introduces other characters and their speech.

After a critical study of N.Ś. with A. Bhā. and of other dramaturgical treatises, Dr. V.Raghavan[1] draws some conclusions on the connotation of the term 'daśarūpa' and the chief features of the daśarūpakas, by themselves and their relation to each other, and their evolution. They are-

a. 'Daśarūpa' means 'Drama' or ten kinds of 'dramatic tendencies.'

b. Each drama gets its name Nāṭaka, Bhāṇa etc. by the predominance of its own special features. The two main tendencies are the 'heroic' portraying heroes of epics, gods and their doings, and the realistic, depicting ordinary society, expressing themselves most perfectly and elaborately in the first two types called the Nāṭaka and the Prakaraṇa. The comic is a tendency which finds expression in both of these, only in a small measure, its need there being the necessity to have a variety of interests. But its pronounced expression and ample treatment are in the type called Prahasana (farce); the smaller expression of the heroic, with more or energetic action like fights is to be had as the common feature of the Samavakāra, Ḍima, Vyāyoga and Ihāmṛga. The Anka or Utsṛṣṭikāṅka which is a karuṇa one act piece, can be one feature in any bigger drama. In essence, it is only the introduction of pathos of the types of women weeping at the loss of their lovers. The Prahasana is available in the Nāṭaka in its representative, the Vidūṣaka. It is amply available in a Prakaraṇa like the Mṛcchakaṭika. The Prahasana further, along with the Vīthī is given as part of the Prastāvanā (Prologue).

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[1] 'A note on the name Daśarūpaka', Journal of Oriental Research, Madras VII, 1933. PP. 146-162, Sanskrit Drama, Its Aesthetics and Production, of Dr. V.Raghavan, Madras, 1993.

c. All ten rūpakas are not major varieties or perfect types of drama. Of them, only Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa are full-fledged dramas. Bharata himself has recognised this by mentioning them at the head of the ten and by calling them sarvavṛtti-viniṣpannau (N.S. XVIII 6-7 G.O.S.ed.). Śāradātanaya says more clearly that the first type called Nāṭaka is the prakṛti, the latest, the perfection of drama, historically speaking, in which can be found aspects of all the earlier and imperfect varieties.

d. The evolution of the ten dramas -

(i) The Vīthī, a comic monologue or a dialogue could be the earliest drama. No specimen of the Vīthī is available now. Bharata provides evidences for its disappearance in Prahasana.

(ii) From the Vīthī the Bhāṇa, a one-man show on comic and erotic theme arose.

(iii) The Aṅka or Utsṛṣṭikāṅka is a one- act play in which one or more women (wives) wail over the death of their husband(s) killed perhaps in a battle or some calamity.

No example of this drama is available. Usually Rati-vilāpa in Kumārasambhava is cited as a probable illustration.

(iv) The Samavakāra, the Ihāmṛga, the Ḍima and the Vyāyoga represent the uddhata or āviddha types of drama, being heroic in theme. They are the early specimens of dramatic performances depicting fights amongst devas and asuras. The Asurvijaya (N.Ś.I, 56) and the Amṛtamathana (N.Ś. IV. 2-4), described as a Samavakara were the first dramatic performances. Then when Brahman took Bharata's troupe to Śiva's abode, the theme of Tripuradāha described as a Ḍima, was enacted (N.Ś. IV.10)

(v) These four uddhata drama-types by the influence of the mahākāvyas and the growing mythological legends, gradually perfected themselves into the heroic Nāṭaka.

(vi) The tendency to depict men of society, their habits and ridiculousness began with small imperfect types like Vīthī, grew into Prahasana and perfected itself into Prakaraṇa.

Besides the above ten, there was one more drama-type called Nāṭikā in Bharata's time. The Nāṭikā is known to be derived from the Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa. It has the latter's features but had a king as its hero; but that king need not be a famous Purāṇic king. The Nāṭikā is illustrated by the Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa and a host of plays that arose in its wake.

From the above details it is clear that of the ten dramas described by Bharata two of them, Vīthī and Utsṛṣṭikāṅka, were already extinct in his time. The two fullest and most perfect types presenting love-themes with some heroism and humour are Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa (as also Nāṭikā that blended their characteristics), and they are very appealing and enjoyable in production through elaborate use of music and dance. Such productions are called by Bharata as graceful and delicate (sukumāra, lalita, masṛṇa), requiring an atmosphere of grace, and pleasing motifs. Bharata considers this style as the most artistic and praiseworthy.

As opposed to the Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa are the four categories of Rūpaka-Ḍima, Samavakāra, Ihāmṛga and Vyāyoga-in which mostly gods and demons fight. From the viewpoint of production too, such plays are called forceful and violent (uddhata or āviddha). Two more rūpaka-types, the farce (Prahasana) and the amorous one-man show (Bhāṇa) present lower characters or characters in unseemly activities. They are realistic in milieu. A realistic style of production not using conventional methods and materials is to be adopted for these two humorous satirical plays and for the uddhata type. Such a realistic production is inferior, but Bharata allows it. (N.Ś. XIII. 71-77).

Illustrations of Rūpakas

It would be clear from the above sketch that the Sanskrit stage developed a wide of variety dramatic types - the heroic, the social, erotic, farce, violent and pathetic, short one-act plays as well as lengthy ones of 6 to 10 acts. Of the ten types of dramas mentioned above, the Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa have been quite popular from ancient times to the modern period. The written plays under the above two categories, particularly Nāṭaka, as available in print and manuscripts, are a legion. They mostly follow the prescriptions contained in the various dramaturgical texts. Amongst them, a few are somewhat unique. These would be dealt with later in this monograph.

We could now take up for consideration in the first instance the practical specimens of the three simple drama types Vīthī, utsṛṣṭikāṅka and Bhāṇa.

Vīthī, Utsṛṣṭikāṅka (or Aṅka) : It was seen above that these two drama-types have only some general characteristics, and that even in Bharata's times they appear to have been absorbed in larger rūpakas.

It is noteworthy in this connection that in the 18th century a certain author, out of curiosity, is known[1] to have composed dramas to illustrate the unfamiliar 8 types of rūpakas, that include Vīthī and Aṅka. The author is Venkappiah, a minister of Mysore who served nominally under the rulers Krishnarāja Woḍeyār II, Nanjārāja Wodeyār and Beṭṭada Chāmarāja, but actually under Haider Ali from 1763 to 1780 A.D. He was an eminent scholar in Sanskrit and Kannada; in these two languages he is known to have composed drama, campūs, works on alaṁkāra and vyākaraṇa. Most of these works are only in manuscripts, and are available at the Oriental Research Institute, Mysore.

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[1] Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society (QJMS) XXXI.i. pp.~~44~~- 45

The Vīthī type is entitled *Sītākalyāṇa*. It is in one act and is obviously on the marriage of Sītā with Rāma. The invocatory verse is on Vālmīki. In the Prologue (Prastāvanā) it is stated that Vīthīs are rare like a family woman (apūrvaḥ khalu kulapālikāyā iva vīthī). It is said that 'light Śṛṅgāra runs throughout the play.'

According to Bharata the Vīthī should be in one act, it should comprise the thirteen Vīthyaṅgas, and be enriched with the features of all the sentiments. It may include the three kinds of dramatic characters, high, middling and low. It should be enacted by one or two characters.

A close study of Venkappiah's Sītākalyāṇa is necessary to find out if it closely follows Bharata's description.

The same author has written a specimen of Utsṛṣṭikāṅka. This is on the happy marriage of Rukmiṇī with Krishna, called 'Rukmiṇī-mādhava-nāmāṇkaū'. As in the Bhāgavata Śiśupāla prefers to marry Rukmiṇī by force; Rukmiṇī hence sends a letter to Krishna through a brahmin. The play is said[1] to be full of grief of women, cries of dejection etc. and also a touch of Śṛṅgāra at the happy marriage of the couple.

Bhāṇa - Of the play-forms (Rūpaka) Bhāṇa is unique in being performed by a single actor, the Viṭa. The theme in Bhāṇa is short; it is descriptive of the activities during a day of persons involved in gaity, love, sports, gambling etc. It is a satire on the hypocritical behaviour of those in the higher strata of society, as also a criticism of those who spend their time in activities of love, gambling and desparate ways of living. The solo actor of the play, the Viṭa, a chief man of the town, who knows in detail all the persons dwelling there, is most suited to introduce the various characters and criticise them in diverse ways. The other characters occurring in the theme are supposed to exist off-stage; with all of them the Viṭa carries his conversation through the Nāṭya-dharmī technique of Ākāśabhāṣita or imaginary conversation.

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[1] Q.J.M.S. XXXI pp. 44-45

The Bhāṇa is thus unique among Sanskrit drama-types in its theme, content and representation.

The best as well as the earliest specimens of Bhanas are available in the collection Caturbhāṇī[1] (generally assigned to the Gupta period) containing four unique bhāṇas-Śūdraka's Padmaprābhṛtaka, Vararuci's Ubhayābhisārikā, Iśvaradatta's Dhūrtaviṭa-saṁvāda and Śyāmilaka's Pādatāḍitaka. Their language is sharp, witty and satirical, and the characters are deftly drawn and individualised.

No bhāṇa is known to have been composed for a few centuries after the Caturbhāṇī. In the medieval period some bhāṇas by well known South Indian authors like Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa and Varadāḍcārya alias Ghaṭikāśatam Ammāl are known. But from late 17th to 20th centuries the bhāṇa-type caught the fancy of many authors from different parts of South India, so that it seems to have been monopolised in this part of the country.

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[1] The Caturbhāṇī has been printed collectively twice (Trichur, 1922 and Bombay, 1959) and also individually.

More than 100 bhāṇa-specimens are available in print and in manuscripts. Writers of history of Sanskrit dramatic literature like A.B. Keith[1] and S.K. De[2] were aware of just a few of these later bhāṇas, and also considered them as monotonous in form and content and contrast to the Caturbhāṇī.

On a critical analysis of the hitherto available forty printed bhāṇas, the present writer has however noted, that three of them work generally on the pattern sketched by the theorists of dramaturgy, but yet reveal some distinct characteristics of their own. They are chronologically Vatsarāja's Karpūracarita from West India in the 12th-13th centuries; Śrīrāmajanma (end of 19th and beginning of 20th century) by Tārācaraṇa Tarkaratna, a Bengali author describing the 12-day festivities in connection with the birth of a child Rāma to the author's patron Prabhunārāyaṇa Simha at Benaras; and Kandarpadarpavilāsa (19th-20th centuries) of Bellaṃkonda Rāma Rāya from Andhra, embodying the yearnings of a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and his meeting the Lord's diverse forms with their respective consorts.

Now a summary of the earliest Bhāṇa, Padmaprābhṛtaka could be seen.

In the Padmaprābhṛtaka, the Viṭa called Śaśa enters after the invocatory verse. It is an enjoyable morning in the spring season.

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1. PP. 263-4, Sanskrit Drama.
2. Aspects of Sanskrit Literature, pp.1-26; A History of Sanskrit Literature, Classical Period, Vol. I.pp. 248-55, 487-93

Śaśa's dear friend Muladeva (Karṇīputra) is a distinguished person at Ujjain. A chivalrous and amorous person, Mūladeva has more than one beloved at Ujjain and Pāṭaliputra. His latest lady-love is Devadattā, an accomplished dancer. His frequent visits to Devadattā's house introduce him to her younger sister Devasenā. Mūladeva is pining as he was not able to establish closer contacts with Devasenā, due to her always being in the company of Devadattā and also owing to Devasenā being too young and consequently reticent in matters of love. Mūladeva has requested Śaśa to find out how Devasenā was disposed towards him. Śaśa does not want to go immediately to Devasenā's house for, her elder sister Devadattā will be still at home. So he decides to stroll along the streets of Ujjain and chat with his friends for some time. The following are such friends of his:-

1. Poet Sārasvatabhadra - He is a mediocre poet and a plagiarist. (Purāṇa-kāvya-padaccheda-grathana- charmakāra). At the time of Śaśa meeting him, he is scribbling with a chalk piece at the verandah of his house. His latest composition is on the Spring. Śaśa blesses him that he may have a bright future.

2. Pīṭhamarda, Darduraka, who laughs at Śaśa for his blessing a poet (vāg-iśvaraya vāgbhir arcanam)

3. Dattakalasi, a student of Pāṇinian grammar. His staunchness to this school of grammar goes to such an extent that he has the name 'Pāṇini' prefixed to his own name. Just before meeting Śaśa he has had an oral dispute with the

grammarian-bastards (Vaiyākaraṇa-pāraśava) of the Kātantra school. Being a grammarian, he is a repository of harsh syllables (Ākshara-koṣthāgāra) and his exuberant use of out-of-the way grammatical forms of words grip a person like a snare (Vāg-vāgura). He greets Śaśa with an inquiry about his sound sleep-kim sukham aśayiṣthāḥ (using aorist form). Just the previous day Dattakalasi was met by his beloved Rasanāvatikā while he was making his offering to gods. At that time he told her : "wretched lady, do not touch me when I am worshipping the gods'. (Vrshali, mā mā havir juhūshantam sprākshīḥ). Śaśa advises him to use common words at least with friends and women.

4. Pavitraka, son of a Judge. He secretly visits the courtesans; although himself impure, practises purity outwardly. In the high streets, he holds up the wet clothes and in trying to avoid the crowd has his limbs contracted (Saṅkucita-sarvāṅgah) and covering the nostrils with his two fingers, stands leaning on the pedestal of Śiva. The Viṭa advises him to give up his covert way of life.

5. Saṅghilaka, a Buddhist monk : he is secretively coming out of a courtesan's house, with his body wrapped up in a dirty mantle. Śaśa makes fun of him as 'Vihāra-vetāla' (pseudo monk in a Buddhist Vihāra and one addicted to sports). The monk covers himself by saying that he came to Sanghadāsikā's hous to console her on her mother's death in Buddha's words. He wants to sneakily run away under the pretext of avoiding untimely meals (akālabhojana)

which is one of the Śikshāpadas of Buddha. Śaśa laughs at his covert ways of life and adds that his Moksha is really impossible.

6. A young girl Vanarājikā decorating herself beautifully with various flowers and coming from the temple of Manmatha.
7. Young Priyaṅguyashṭikā, engaged in ball-play. She is playing with a red ball (mānaś-śilam kandukam) in the garden amidst her friends who count her ball-beats, as she has made a bet with them. She presents a charming sight by her bending down, getting up, going round, jumping up, retreating, running, and such variegated movements.

After meeting these freinds Viṭa reaches Devasenā's house. Luckily her elder sister Devadattā has gone out then. Devasenā in in bed as she was not keeping fit. Śaśa could see that she was suffering due to her love for Mūladeva. He slowly informs the sensitive yet reticent Devasenā that Mūladeva too was suffering on her account, and that she could meet Mūladeva in person the following evening. This is of course most welcome to Devasenā. Before taking leave of Devasenā, Śaśa requests that she may send through the Viṭa, as worthy gift (Prābhṛitaka) to Mūladeva, the lotus (Padma) which Devasenā was having on her body to alleviate her love-fever.

The Padmaprābhṛtaka is the earliest and best among the bhāṇas. This is being followed by three later Bhāṇas, each unique in its own way.

Karpūracarita - This is a work of Vatsarāja, a minister of the Chālukyan ruler Paramardideva

(1163-1203 A.D.) of Kālañjara, and his son and successor, Trailokyavarmadeva (1212-41 A.D.). This Bhāṇa is published in the Rūpakaṣaṭka (G.O.S.8) and lately by the Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute.[1]

As far as the subject-matter is concerned the trend of the story in this shortest (in 34 verses) available printed bhāṇa- specimen could be made out only with some difficulty. In short, the story is that of a viṭa, Karpuraka, who has lost all his money in gambling and is passionately in love with the courtesan Vilāsavatī. After performing some fraudulent deeds he becomes in the end rich and secures the hand of Vilāsavatī too.

In the Prologue (Prastāvanā) of the play the main theme is indirectly mentioned in a mataphorical way by the description of the knavish sun (Karpūraka) approaching the sky (courtesan), after dispelling the moon (Mañjīraka) of dim splendour and setting at naught the night (bawd Kalāvatī).

The details of his roguish activities as recounted in the body of the Bhāṇa are as follows :

1. Karpūraka impersonates Nipuṇaka, goes as a messenger to Mañjīraka, an influential Viṭa of the town, who is in love with Vilāsavatī, the beloved of Karpūraka. The latter receives Mañjīraka's ring as a gift by telling him a lie that Vilāsavatī loves truly Mañjīraka only and not Karpūraka (vv. 15 to 22).

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[1] Ed. by S.S.Janaki with English tr. and critical Introduction, 1989.

2. Posing as another Nipuṇaka, the long-lost younger brother of Caturaka, who is the servant of an influential, rich gambler Haradatta, Karpūraka meets Caturaka and gives him counterfeit coins. Caturaka pays the counterfeit money to an innkeeper, drinks wine heartily there. When he is in a drunken condition, the sober Nipuṇaka carries away the necklace and other valuable possessions of Haradatta which were then in the possession of Caturaka (vv. 27 to 30).
3. With the necklace of Haradatta, he goes to the latter's beloved Candrasenā as the messenger of Haradatta. Giving a false message to Candrasenā that Haradatta had won large amounts of money in gambling that day, gains an easy access into her house. At dead of night when the servants were under the spell of wine, he steals the valuable belongings of Candrasenā including a precious china-silk dress that Candanaka, another lover of Candrasenā, gave her (v. 23; 23/24; 31/32).
4. With the ring of Mañjīraka (referred to in 1 above) and Candrasenā's belongings, Karpūraka goes to the house of Mañjīraka, steals the latter's possessions and keeps Candrasenā's things there instead (23/24).

The achievements of Karpūraka are-

a. Mañjīraka, his worst enemy is arrested with the charge of having stolen Candrasenā's belongings (22/23).
b. Haradatta too, another influential rogue of the city, is imprisoned had exiled with the charge

of the counterfeit money in his possession, which was paid to the innkeeper by his servant Caturaka (31/32; 32/33).

c. Due to a misunderstanding between Vilāsavatī and her mother Kalāvatī, the latter leaves the place (32/33). So Karpūraka secures the hand of Vilāsavatī and is rid of the bawd Kalāvatī as well as the other rich, influential rogues in the city. He also becomes rich (v.33).

Though the activities of Karpūraka are given above in due order and sequence, from the textual references given within brackets for each of these activities, it would be clear that the text does not give them in due order. Also from the textual references of Karpūraka's achievements, it could be made out that they are also scattered at different places in the text.

The Karpūracarita is important and unique among the bhāṇas for more than one reason. They are -

1. It is the earliest bhāṇa in the post- Caturbhāṇī period.
2. Amongst the 100 or more bhāṇas hitherto available in print and manuscripts, only two are from West-India - Karpūracrita written in the 13th century and Pañcāyudhaprapañca (Bombay, 1864) of Trivikrama composed in 1805 A.D.
3. Standing chronologically between the Caturbhāṇī and the later ones, Karpūracarita is unique in plot, its construction and in technical details.

4. It is the earliest bhāṇa in which—
   a. the Prastāvanā is in Sanskrit and Prākṛt and the Sūtradhāra converses off stage (ākāśabhāṣaṇa) with his assistant imaginarily; and
   b. the technicalities of Kāvyasaṁhāra and Praśasti are used in the Bharatavākya.

5. It is the only available Bhāṇa in which -
   a. a major theme runs through continually with no scope for any extraneous incident or criticism of men and matters;
   b. the viṭa's own experiences are narrated (ātmānubhūtaśamsana of Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra) as a single continued theme;
   c. the incidents narrated are completed in about two or three days;
   d. four lāsyāṅgas are used appropriately and successfully;
   e. there are only two other Viṭas, Candanaka and Virodhaka, in off-stage conversation with the chief viṭa, namely Karpūraka; also both Candanaka and Virodhaka are intimately associated with the main incidents as Karpūraka himself is; and,
   f. Prākrt is used profusely and appropriately.

6. It is the shortest (in 34 verses and intervening prose passages) and the best bhāṇa in its presentational aspects.

The Śrīrāmajanma (Banaras, 1875) by the 19th century Sanskrit Scholar Tārācaran Tarkaratna is an unusual Bhāṇa in the sense that the author describes in it the 12-day celebrations in connection

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with the birth of a son Rāma to Prabhu Nārāyaṇasimha, the Benares ruler who patronised Tārācaraṇa.

The bhāṇa is fairly long in 136 verses.

The single person who narrates the birth and the related rituals and cultural functions for the occasion at Benares is not a viṭa that one finds in all the bhāṇas. He is an ordinary spectator (darśaka) called 'Rasanāyaka' who moves about in the different places at Benaras and offers his critical remarks on persons and things.

Unlike in other bhāṇas, there are in it only two imaginary interlocutors, both of them men. They are a royal priest at the beginning and a citizen of Kasi in the rest of the bhāṇa.

The time-duration of the occurrences is twelve days and not a single day.

The 12-day celebrations include the sacraments like Jātakarma and Nāmakaraṇa, and cultural events like musical and dance programmes, visits to the royal household with full paraphernalia to temples and presnetation of valuable gifts.

Kandarpadarpavilāsa (Printed, Bapatla, 1910, in Telugu characters) of Rāma Rāya (1875-1914 A.D.) from Andhra. He was a versatile scholar and writer. His works reveal him to have been a staunch Vaishnavite with a predilection to Advaita. In the present Bhāṇa he emphasises the idea that the union of Self with the Lord is the greatest joy in the world and thus it is itself the sportive play (vilāsa) and love's pride. This philosophical idea is

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worked out in and through the well known format of a bhāṇa.

The scene is set in a celestial city, referred to as the excellent place (puravara), and more fascinating and fabulous than Bhogavatī and Amarāvatī. The Viṭa is significantly called as 'Vaipañcika', a person closely associated with the sportive Lord Krishna holding the flute. He is described as an elderly brahmin with matted hair and wearing dark dress. He has had no opportunity to meet any woman until then and make her his wife or beloved.

Suddenly he is reminded of his intimate friend, the Māyāviṭa (Krishna) who can help him to seek a beloved for himself. Thus he searches for the eight forms of Krishna wiht His different consorts like Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Rādhā, Lakṣaṇā. Bhadrā, Mitravindā, Nagnaciti and Jāmbavatī. He also meets some of Krishna's friends, but to no prupose.

The day is coming to a close. Tired and exhausted, still not being able to find his lady love, he gets utterly disgusted with life. He meets Māyāviṭa again in a hopelessly physical and mental state. At the suggestion of Māyāviṭa Vaipañcika follows him. Suddenly he is himself transformed into a beautiful accomplished woman. Māyāviṭa lovingly caressing him, Vaipancika enjoys eternal bliss with the lord.

Prahasana, like Bhāṇa, is humorous, sometimes farcical, and reflects the contemporary society's vices and ideas. The humour in it arises from its dialogue, action, and even from the structure of the plot, which is usually simple.

There are a good number of dramas of Prahasana type, from the 7th century to the present times. The two earliest Prahasanas, Mattavilāsa & Bhagavadajjukīya are written by Mahendra Vikrama Pallava of Kanchi, and are the best Prahasanas in the field of Sanskrit.

At the beginning of the Mattavilāsa[1] a Kāpālika, by name Satyasoma, enters the scene accompanied by his fiancee, Devasoma. Both are heavily drunken and in this state, the Kāpālika forgets the name of his companion and calls her Somadeva. Devasoma takes him to task for this 'gotraskhalana'. Satyasoma asks for pardon and blames his own drunkenness for the mistake and vows to stop drinking. But Devasoma pleads with him not to stop drinking which she terms 'sacred'. After praising his own sect which permits drinking and throwing an attack on Buddhism, the Kāpālika wants to have another bout. They move to a hearby liquor shop which is compared to a sacrificial hall. The Kāpālika notices that his begging bowl is missing. He also laments that the loss of his bowl may lead to banishment from his religious order. The Kāpālika fears that it might have been stolen either by a dog or by a Buddhist monk since it contained a piece of roasted meat.

Then arrives a Buddhist monk cursing the elderly monks of his order for prohibiting wine and women. He feels that originally there were portions in the sacred texts which permitted these things and that they have been deliberately suppressed by the old monks out of jealousy for the younger monks. He vows to trace the original text and thus render yeoman service to her religion. The sight of this monk hiding something inside of his cloak arouses the suspicion of the Kāpālika. He demands the monk to show the hidden object. The bhikṣu says that it is his own begging bowl but the Kāpālika charges him with stealing of his bowl. In the fight that ensues the Kāpālika and his companion Devasoma are knocked down by the sturdy Buddhist monk. Enter then a Pāśupata who offers to mediate between them. The bhikṣu then shows up his bowl which is red in colour. But the Kāpālika says that the original black colour of his own bowl might have been turned red by the sticky reddish robe of the Buddhist monk.

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[1] Ed. N.P.Unni, Trivandrum, 1974.

Now comes a mad man carrying a bowl which he had snatched from a dog. The Kāpālika recognises it to be his own bowl. He tries to snatch it away from the lunatic who refuses to budge. Being called an 'unmattaka' the lunatic requests the Kāpālika, to show another 'unmattaka' whom he is anxious to meet, and take the bowl as fee for his services. The Kāpālike directs the lunatic to look for the 'unmattaka' behind a wall and the lunatic hurries behind, leaving the bowl. The Kāpālika feels elated at the recovery of his bowl. Devasoma remarks that her lover shines in the company of his bowl like the evening in conjunction with the moon.

The Bhagavadajjukīya (the recluse-cum-courtesan) is a more brilliant production. According to the title, the play is built round a recluse entering by yoga the body of a courtesan (Para-kāya-praveśa). This comedy of errors comes out of a mistake which an emissary of the God of death makes.

A young pupil (Śāṇḍilya) who had formerly tried to stay in a Buddhistic Monastery and had later attached himself to a Yogin, is coming round the city and his Guru too comes and the two go to a garden. There the Guru is trying to teach his lazy pupil but the naughty pupil is not prepared to read anything; when questioned, he shows his muddled head by describing Sāṅkhya tenets for Buddhistic tenets. At that time, a courtesan Vasantasenā comes there with her maid, expecting her lover (Rāmilaka) to join her there. The courtesan (which character is usually addressed in drama as Ajjukā) is whiling away her time by singing and the attention of the pupil is attracted to her. Just then an emissary of the God of Death (Yama) comes there as the ordained time and precise moment had arrived to take away the life of a lady named Vasantasenā. He mistakes the courtesan there in the garden as the person intended and as she is plucking the sprouts of the Aśoka tree, the Death's messenger takes the form of a serpent and bites her. In a short while, the courtesan expires.

The pupil takes this opportunity to approach the courtesan and, despite his teacher's words, he weeps over her body. The maid leaves the courtesan's body in the pupil's care and goes to fetch the courtesan's mother.

Unable to draw away his pupil, the teacher thinks that he might give a display of his yogic powers to impress him, and accordingly leaves his own body on one side and enters with his spirit, the body of the courtesan which had just then fallen. Suddenly to the dismay of the pupil, the courtesan's body not only rises up, but starts talking like the Yogin and calls upon the pupil to study.

The mother of the courtesan arrives and then the lover, and everybody is perplexed at the strange behaviour of the courtesan.

A doctor had already been called and he comes and tries both his magic and quack medicine; the 'Courtesan' not only cross-examines the doctor about his medical knowledge but corrects his grammatical lapses also.

Meantime the emissary of Death had been rebuked by his master for bringing the soul of a wrong Vasantasenā and he rushes back to restore the soul to the courtesan's body, but to his surpirse finds her body animated. Looking around he finds the Yogin's body lying on a side. He understands the situation, but desiring to enjoy some fun, lets the courtesan's soul in his hands in the body of the Teacher lying there.

As the courtesan is cross-examining the medical man, the Teacher's body, now up, starts coquetting and calling the maid and the lover in an amorous manner.

The emissary of the God of Death now decides to end the comedy of errors and requests the Teacher to leave off the unclean body he had entered. The teacher does accordingly, and Death's emissary then transfers the courtesan-spirit from the Yogin's body to the courtesan's body. The maid, mother and lover are glad to see the Ajjukā in her normal state and the pupil is glad to see his Bhagavān in his normal state. The two parties then depart.

There have been a number of Prahasanas from the 7th to the present times. Most of the medieval and subsequent plays are coarse, undignified and stale. However, there are a few among them which contain some new ideas and tendencies that fit in well within the format of the Prahasana and are also appropriate to the contemporary society. We could now consider *three* of such *unique* and enjoyable Prahasanas.

The earliest of the three Prahasanas is the Palāṇḍumaṇḍana[1] of Harijīvana Miśra. This author is an unusual dramatist whose reputation relies on as many as six Prahasanas, a dramatist who has, so to speak, devoted himself to composing this particular genre of drama. The author was patronised by the Jaipur ruler Rāma Simha (1635-89).

Amongst the six Prahasanas the Palāṇḍumaṇḍana is easily the best and unique too. It is a satire on the eating habits and tastes of different parts of India. The different varieties of onion, forbidden by śāstras for orthodox consumption provide the comic material for the poet who works out an entertaining farce, with the Pandits and their women-folk contriving various sly methods to enjoy this delicacy. The synopsis of the play is given below.

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[1] Ed. by Dr. V. Raghavan, Malayamarutam, Vol. III, Rashtriya Sanskrit Saṁsthan, 1973, pp.116-39.

The Prahasana derives its name from one of the characters, a brahman who loves onions. Most of the characters have names which indicate their preferences for different types of foods, so that this comedy-farce immediately reveals itself as a satire on the eating habits of brahmans from different regions of India. The action, and there is much of it, takes place in the home of Lingoji Bhaṭṭa on the occasion of the celebration of the garbhādhāna of his second wife Ciñcā. After the Prastāvanā in which the sūtradhāra announces the Prahasana and urges the naṭī to prepare for the arrival of the guests, the comedy begins with the entrance of Prajāpatideva who foretells of the arrival of Palāṇḍumaṇdanā and the others. Liṅgojībhaṭṭa's sister Kvathikā asks about the health of his daughter Raktamūlikā, and her mother Pūrṇapolikā indicates that she is in love with her cousin Gṛñjanādri, the son of Kvathikā and Tryambakabhaṭṭa. They assure her that he also is in love with Raktamūlikā, but any thought of their marriage would disappoint Laśunapanta, an old man who expects to marry her. Just as they are discussing this, Laśunapanta enters and what follows immediately is a delightfully funny discussion of the marriage of Raktamūlikā. The women are only interested in his wealth and in the fact that, with his love for laśuna (garlic), he cannot live long. In this, one of the truly humorous scenes of the play, much discussion is made about dowries and money settlements and finally poor old

Laśunapanta has a gastro-intestinal attack. A variety of medicines is suggested; most of them are herbs and vegetable roots which have no place in a religious ceremony. Each character produces effortlessly his favourite edible and the whole room becomes cluttered up with articles which belong to a kitchen. In freeflowing poetical stanzas each of the guests defends the foodstuff which is sure to revive Laśunapanta. At last the old man is restored at about the time of the arrival of the Bengali brahmans, Bhaṭṭācārya and his pupils. As Bhaṭṭācārya enters the house, he closes his nostrils for he cannot tolerate the smell of onions. The south Indian brahmans, led by Palāṇḍumaṇḍana, say that they cannot stand the smell of rotten fish, the kind that Bengalis eat. Bhaṭṭācārya assures them that fish is not prohibited in the śāstras, but they shout in unison that that refers to the other yugas, not to the kaliyuga. They immediately engage in a heated argument, disagreeing violently with each other. Jagadīśa, one of the South Indians, slips out of the house and calls the police. By a stratagem he convinces the police that Bhaṭṭācārya is in the wrong. The police enter the house and accuse Bhaṭṭācārya and his pupils of having defiled a religious ceremony when they see strewn about the room all kinds of harsh-smelling vegetables. They arrest the Bengalis and take them away. The South Indians shake hands with each other and congratulate Jagadīśa who did such a clever turn by summoning the police. The garbhādhāna has to be postponed according to Lingojibhatta, because of all the confusion. The comedy ends with the departure of the guests.

Two more Prahasanas, namely Snuṣāvijaya[1] (Triumph of the Daughter-in-law) and Śvaśrūvijaya (Triumph of the mother-in-law) composed as its reply, are interesting and unique. They are both quite modern and do not deal with monks, courtesans and viṭas who have no relevance to the present times.

The Snuṣāvijaya is written by Sundararāja (1841-1944) belonging to a Vaishnava family in the village Ilattūr in the Travancore state. He was honoured by their Highnesses Viśākham Tirunāl (1880-85) and Mūlam Tirunāl (1885-1924).

The author has depicted in the Prahasana format the age-old domestic problem of the conflict between the mother-iṅ-law and the daughter-in-law, with a keen insight into the psychology of the origin of this incompatibility between the aged mother, the erstwhile mistress of the house, and the new entrant, the daughter-in-law into whose hands the keys slowly pass. The tragedy of the once beloved mother becoming an impossible crone, the anguish of the honour-loving father of the house, the dilemma of the son torn between obedience and love, the quiet suffering of the young wife who would rather resign herself to her fate than make the son, her husband, incur the hatred of his mother, the perversity of the mother-in-law and the sister-in-law, these are portrayed here in all their details familiar to us in our lives everyday.

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[1] Ed. by Dr. V. Raghavan, Annals of Oriental Research, University of Madras, Vol. II. 1942-43 Sanskrit section; Reprinted in Samskrita Ranga Annual VII 1979.

The coarseness of the earlier Prahasanas is absent from this modern production, and the author is one endowed with a gift for minute observation and understanding, a sense of humour and a simple and pointed expression.

Suitable names are given to the characters in the play. The cruel mother-in-law and his daughter are Durāśā and Durlalitā. The obedient and good-natured daughter-in-law is Saccaritrā; her husband and supporter is Suguṇa, her father-in-law is Suśīla of good conduct.

The Śvaśrū-vijaya[1] is another social Prahasana by Sri V.K. Subrahmanya Sastri. The ideas presented here are quite distinct from those in Snuṣāvijaya. While the latter depicted a wicked mother-in-law and a meek and well-behaved daughter-in-law, the present play presents the reverse of that situation, a family being shaken up by an unruly daughter-in-law, who, in alliance with a wicked friend, seeks to bring under her dominance her husband by administering some herbal drug to him and to send her parents-in-law away from the house. In the end, the tide of events turns against her, she realises her mistakes and becomes friendly and submissive to her good-natured mother- in-law.

In this playlet too, the names of the characters are well chosen. The daughter-in-law is Kaṭumukhī; her friend and father are respectively Kalahapriyā and Durjanadhvamsa.

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[1] Kumbhakonam, 1922 (Grantha script).

Both the plays Snuṣāvijaya and Śvaśrūvijaya, in edited versions were presented on the stage by the Samskrita Ranga, at Madras, in the sixties.

Violent Drama-types (uddhata, āviddha)

Besides the four minor varieties of Rūpaka dealt with above, namely, Aṅka, Vīthī, Bhāṇa and Prahasana, there are four others-Ḍima, Īhāmṛga, Vyāyoga and Samavakāra. As contrasted with the other six rūpaka-types that require delicate production and action and hence called by Bharata as Sukumāra-variety, these four are called Forceful or Violent (Āviddha or Uddhata). Their stage- performances involve violent movements and actions in order to depict types of combat and magical feats. Persons endowed with valour, strength and dare-devil nature, like demons and rakshasas are presented in them. Costumes and make-up of characters are showy and bright. Masks too are used if necessary. (N.Ś.G.O.S. ed. XIII. 59-63).

Amongst them the Vyāyoga is fairly represented in practice. The earliest is the interesting one-act play 'Madhyama' of Bhāsa on the motif of Bhīma, the middle of the Pāṇḍavas, fighting his own son Ghaṭotkacha unawares, in order to save the life of the second and middle son of a brahmin family. Nearly 40 vyāyogas by writers from the 10th century A.D. to the present times are available in print and manuscripts. A scholar is currently working under my supervision at the Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Madra, for a Ph.D. Thesis of the University of Madras on the "Theory and Practice of Vyāyoga in Sanskrit literature".

The other three drama-types, are sparsely represented. The Ḍima on "the burning of the three cities by Śiva" (Tripuradāha) is mentioned by Bharata himself at the beginning of N.Ś. (IV. 9-10) as produced at the bidding of Brahmā at the charming natural sites in the Himalayan region. In the same context Bharata mentions the presentation of a Samavakāra on the churning of the milky ocean for nectar (Amṛtamathana). On the same or similar topics there are only a few later Ḍimas and Samavakāras.

The fourth uddhata type, Īhāmṛga, is also known only through a couple or more specimens. Amātya Vatsarāja has written the Rukmiṇīpariṇaya (Ptd. in Rūpakaṣaṭka, G.O.S. 8); Pradhāna Veṅkappiah's Mahendravijaya describes Indra's fight with the demon Bali and his victory over him after getting the nectar from the churning of the ocean. This work is in manuscript in Mysore.[1]

Minor rūpakas in retrospect. The eight minor varieties of Rūpakas, called by Abhinava Gupta as 'pure light entertainment' (ranjaka-pradhāna) can be reviewed now in retrospect briefly, specially with reference to their stage worthiness.

a. Vīthī and Utsṛṣṭikānka have become almost absolete.

b. Of the Uddhata-type of four rūpakas three, Īhāmṛga, Ḍima and Samavakāra are poorly represented in their specimens. Even the available few are streo-typed and are on mostly epic, mythological and purāṇic themes. There is also no new dramatic technique introduced in the available compositions.

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[1] P.41. Q.J.M.S. XXXI. i.July 1940

c. Vyāyoga is well represented, A critical study of this category in theme and technique is yet to be done.

d. Prahasana format has been favourite amongst the poets from the 7th cent. to the modern period. Some of them are farcical and not in good taste. As seen above the Bhagavadajjukīya has an interesting theme; the few characters in it are well drawn and featured, and there is much scope for action in the course of the development of its simple theme. The exchange of the normal behaviour of the teacher (bhagavān) and courtesan (ajjukā) as revealed through, in their utterances and physical gestures, brings about some really funny situations.

Some of the later Prahasanas have taken to new light themes like the critism of eating habits of people in different regious in India in the Palāṇḍumaṇḍana. Besides the humorous theme the presence of characters drawn from different parts of India appearing in it in their respective costumes and speaking Sanskrit in their typical accent would make the presentation quite appealing and interesting.

e. Bhāṇa is interesting in its format and presentation technique. The essential Nāṭyadharmī in bhāṇa is the ākāśabhāṣaṇa (speech in the air) through which the single person of viṭa introduces all the other characters in the play. As a unique one-man whow it has affinities with as well as differences from the play-forms Rūpakas on the one hand, and the Uparūpakas or Nṛtyaprabandhas on the other. It is also a highly significant art-form and affords scope for high histrionic skill within a limited frame-work.

The Bhāṇa is very well illustrated; poets from the Gupta period down to the present times have taken fancy to compose the one-act bhāṇa. Of course, many of them are monotonous and not action-oriented. Some of them are interesting and two are noteworthy for providing much scope for action[1] by the single character of viṭa.

The earliest is the Padmaprābhṛitaka (lotus-gift) in the Caturbhāṇī collection, that is rich in pungent humour and a criticism of the contemporary society in a lighter vein. The characters are deftly drawn and individualised. As seen above the characters in this bhāṇa are quite interesting - a mediocre poet, pompous grammarian displaying his knowledge, a vicious Buddhist monk etc. Each of these characters is graphically described by Śūdraka in apt and sarcastic statements. The Viṭa has thus the scope of sketching each character to the audience effectively through such pen portarits and then talk to them humorously through the Nāṭyadharmī of Ākāśabhāṣita.

The Karpūracarita dealt with above is easily the best in its presentational aspect. In it Vatsaraja has presented well-planned situations within the small and limited framework of a bhāṇa, and using only a few characters.

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[1] In my thesis on Bhāṇas at the University of Oxford I have dealt with at detail the problems in the staging of the available specimens of Bhāṇa. The Karpūracarita and Śūdraka's Padmaprābhṛtaka were also directed by me and presented by the Samskrita Ranga in 1974 and 1981 respectively.

In the scene proper the Viṭa Karpūraka enters in a angry mood after hearing the remarks by the Sūtradhāra's assistant about the fraudulent nature of rakes. Then Karpūraka tells his interlocutor Candanaka that he too will follow him to the gambling house (vv. 7-9). But when Candanaka feels curious to know about Karpūraka's love for Vilāsavatī, Karpūraka is too willing to do so and in painting these pictures about Vilāsavatī as narrated by Karpūraka in a reminiscent mood, Vatsarāja has indeed used his dramatic skill to the best possible advantage. First in this series of pictures, is of Vilāsavatī, sleepless due to a love-quarrel and addressing sleep in a song that she should pitilessly take hold of herself so that at least in a dream she will be able to see Karpūraka. At the end of this mood- depiction Candanaka asks Karpūraka whether he is holding a lute. 'Yes, indeed', says Karpūraka, 'with the help of this lute only Vilāsavatī used to sing a song hearing the stamp of my name'. So saying Karpūraka sings that song too (vv. 10-11). At the end of the lute-play Candanaka says : 'Why do you close your eyes in deep thought and beat your chest?' Karpūraka replies tearfully that he was then recollecting the occasion when Vilāsavatī played the game of dice with a friend of hers made up as Karpūraka, and how she won the game many a time and thereby enjoyed the bet of a close embrace of her friend, all of which were delightfully looked at by Karpūraka himself from a hiding place

(v. 12). Next Candanka asks why Karpūraka was shedding tears continuously. Now it was the thought about Vilāsavatī who, set aside her love-anger, and self-effacingly offered herself completely to him (vv. 13- 14).

After this series of reminiscent pictures the mood changes. The next set of incidents describes Karpūraka wreaking vengeance on his rivals Mañjīraka and Haradatta by impersonating Nipuṇaka and carrying false errands to Mañjīraka and Chandrasenā. Still not meeting with success and having lost all wealth in gambling, Karpūraka appears before Māṇibhadra in a despondent mood coupled with anger (vv. 14-6). By such varying moods and situations coming in quick succession, by completely avoiding descriptions of any sort and by presenting the story with gripping interest, this shortest available Bhāṇa affords much scope for action.

Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa. These two rūpaka-types are important for the theoretical, and practical and presentational view-points. Of these two categories the specimens of Nāṭaka are many; the most important of them like the Śākuntalam, Uttararāmacarita, Veṇīsaṃhāra and Mudrārākṣasa are quite well known in their context. Of course each Nāṭaka of Prakaraṇa differs from the other, in its plot, angi and anga rasas, and dramatic technique. Some of these new highlights could be seen now.

New dramatic aspects. As far as the theme is concerned, for example, the majority of the Nāṭakas take up a core mythological or epic episode or from Udayana-saga. The dominant rasa too is generally the Śrngāra. A few plays are on historical/political plot, as in Viśākhadatta's Mudrārākshasa. The Nāgānanda is a lone illustration for highlighting, besides Śṛṅgāra, the Bodhisattva's virtues of unlimited benevolence and resolution in the face of death. This gradually led to the new category of allegorical or philosophical plays in which abstract concepts, virtues and vices, and systems of thought are cast as characters. The beginnings of this type are already seen in the fragments of Aśvaghoṣa's play on Śārīputra unearthed at Turfan. In this Buddhist drama abstract concepts like knowledge (Buddhi) and firmness (Dhṛti) are presented as characters.

The Āgamaḍambara[1] (also called Ṣaṇmata Nāṭaka) by Jayanta, the poet-logician of Kashmir of the 9th century, is a pioneering philosophical play. It presents the adherents of different schools of philosophy as they prevailed in the time of the poet-the Bauddha, Jaina, Cārvāka, Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya-cum-Śaiva, Āgama (chiefly Pāñcarātra) and the depraved sects of Śaiva and the Nīlāmbara. The play closes with the elevating message, that "Vedas and Āgamas of all persuasions, lead to the same goal, even as all rivers fall into the same sea, and that the different paths are like different doors of the same mansion".

The Prabodhacandrodaya of Kṛṣṇamiśra (11th cent.) portrays with much ingenuity, force, and humour, the monistic philosophy. This unique play inaugurated a regular category of philosophical and allegorical plays produced in different parts of the country to propagate the several schools of philosophical religious thought. Dr. V. Raghavan[1] has mentioned nearly 50 dramas, in print and manuscript, under this category.

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[1] Ed. Dr. V. Raghavan and A.C. Thakur, Darbhanga, 1969.

Even in dramas on Rāma, Krishna, and Śiva, the concept of Bhakti was developed and through it Śānta rasa was depicted as the ultimate Rasa. Aesthetics,[2] more specifically drama,[3] has been shown to lie at the heart of Gauḍīya Vaishnavism. As seen already even a short play like the Kandarpadarpavilāsa has harnessed the idea of the individual's love with the lord and union with him as the ultimate purpose. It is noteworthy that this concept is evolved through an erotic Bhāṇa type of play. The introduction of the philosophical and religious ideas within the structural frame of a Nāṭaka was quite natural and in keeping with the format and concepts of Sanskrit Drama. For, the rasa-anubhava was no doubt the primary end of Drama. The secondary purpose was also to educate and enlighten the larger audience.

New techniques. It is interesting to note that not only ideas as suiting the full fledged Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa were introduced, new techniques are also found in some of the ancient dramas. The 'Uttararāmacarita' Bhavabhūti presents a play within a play in the 7th act which deals with Sītā's adventures in the last 12 years. In this production Sītā plays the role of herself. In the same manner, an unusual meeting of Rāma and Sītā happens in the IV act of Dhīranāga's Kundamālā. Herein Sītā (and other women) due to the divine powers of Vālmīki, become invisible to Rāma and other male members of his entourage during their visit to Vālmīki's hermitage. Rāma, after sending his pregnant wife Sītā outside Ayodhyā, sees for the first time, her reflection in the river Gomatī but not the original Sītā. A poignant emotional situation arises and this is sensitively described by the dramatist.

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[1] The Number of Rasas, Madras 1975 (III ed.) pp. 41-47..

[2] Dr. V.Raghavan, Ibid. pp. 142-7

[3] Drama as a mode of religious realisation - (The Vidagdhamadhava of Rupa Goswami), Dr. Donna M. Wulff, AAR Academy Series 43, U.S.A. 1984.

Again, a whole play as acts within acts was composed by the Mauryan minister Subandhu (4th cent. B.C.). This play available in fragments[1] is called Vāsavadattā-nāṭyadhārā. It is about a court-intrigue of Bindusāra's time. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that the actors of one act become the spectators of the next.

Sanskrit Drama on the stage

There are many evidences from which we know that the Sanskrit Drama was written for the stage. It is well known that the N.Ś. was compiled for the composition, stage-presentation and audience's enjoyment of the Sanskrit drama. As the N.Ś. has thrown into oblivion all its predecessors by virtue of its excellence and importance, it is virtually impossible to have even a skeletal picture of the dramatic tradition before the time of this text.

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[1] For referencees and citations from this play see Dr. V.Raghavan, Indian Historical Quarterly, XIX. 1943 pp. 69-71, XX. 1944 p. 85

Abhinavagupta on Abhinayas for Rūpakas

It is quite clear, however, that A.G. was quite aware of the staging of rūpakas and the Nāṭyasampradāya that was prevalent before, and during his time. He critically assesses these presentational aspects in many ceontexts. In his interest and eagerness to preserve the authentic tradition known to him which was losing ground even in his times, he has recorded some of them for posterity. In many instances he illustrates his viewpoint from citations in well known and little known dramas. A few contexts taken at random could be seen now. Firstly A.G.'s references to Nāṭyācāryas/Nṛttācāryas may be seen. They are-

(i) The N.Ś.IX.18-26 gives the manifold viniyogas of the Patāka hand-pose. The mode and direction of this hand-pose varied according to the context, and like any bodily movement, Patāka is a kinetic motion pose and not static. Also the position of the hand could be vertical, horizontal, slant, moving inwards, and outwards, slightly moving, shaking etc. At this point A.G. says that the position, angle, type of movement etc. are to be decided from worldly use and as sanctioned by the line of Nāṭyācāryas.

(ii) Earlier in ch.9 of N.Ś. in the context of the enumeration of the hastas A.G. mentions that the Viniyogas of some closely related poses were followed by a school of Nṛttācāryas according to the prescription of Kohala (G.O.S. ed. Vol.II. p. 26). But A.G. does not accept this tradition.

(iii) The Karaṇas are introduced in the N.Ś. as mainly intended for the Citra Pūrvaranga of a drama. In the body of the drama also they may be used in the context of Nṛtta, fights of different sorts (hand-to-hand, with weapons etc.) and in moving from one place to another (gati-parikrama N.Ś. IV. 56).

Bharata himself adds that they may be employed by Nāṭyācāryas in other places also as and when required.

नृत्ते युद्धे नियुद्धे च तथा गतिपरिक्रमे ।
गतिप्रचारे वक्ष्यामि युद्धचारीविकल्पनम् ॥

A.G. adds here that where the total sense of a sentence or verse is to be depicted Karaṇas are to be used. Even where individual words are taken up for representation, when there is a necessity to project a particular idea as revealed through them, Karaṇas could be employed (G.O.S.I, p.96.1956 ed.) in some section of the verse or statement beginning at the middle or the end.

As an illustration A.G. gives the Nāndī verse in the Ratnāvali, pādāgrasthitayā etc. Here in the first line, Pārvatī's Śṛngāric pose before Śiva is described. She is standing on her toes and her body is bent slightly due to the weight of her breasts. The second line describes her coming within the range of Śiva's three loving glances when she was offering worship to him. The third line delineates her Sāttvika-bhāvas of shyness, shivering and horripilation due to the intensity of love. The fourth line picturises her Puṣpāñjali, which was intended to be offered on Śiva's head, but fell midway under the spell of her strong emotion. A.G. feels that at the end of this verse, the first Karaṇa Talapuṣpapuṭa is to be performed which will be appropriate for the flower-offering (G.O.S.I, p.96, 1965 ed.)

(iv) Another useful advice that A.G. gives is with reference to the performance of a series of Karaṇas. For example when the Karaṇa Talapuṣapuṭa is to be shown after a few Karaṇas, the sequence of the movement of the hands and feet of the earlier ones are to be given up slowly and charmingly with the proper performance of the Vartanas, so that the switch over to the new pose is graceful and with no break or discontinuity. A.G. adds that this instruction will be of use to Nṛttācāryas (Ibid., p.96)

(v) A.G. records that while performing a series of Karaṇas in an Aṅgahāra, the Nāṭyācāryas felt that they should be shown in all the four directions (Ibid., p. 140).

The last Karaṇa in the series could be done facing the audience (Ibid., p. 151).

(vi) The Pūrvaraṅga and its two types, Śuddha and Citra, are dealt with at great detail in chaps. 5, and 29. The Citra Pūrvaranga especially consists of a number of technicalities of vocal and instrumental music, solo and group dance consisting of Aṅgahāras, Piṇḍībandhas and Karaṇas, Dhruvā songs etc. The various items were done both behind and outside the curtain. Obviously in working out these technicalities there were different viewpoints. A.G. of course has great reverence only for Bharata and his tradition. In ch. 29 of N.Ś. (G.O.S. IV,p.120) he records the differences in the sampradāyas of Bharata and Nandin regarding the constituents of the Citra Pūrvaraṅga. In this connection, A.G. reproduces the Nandimata in full (Ibid., pp.120-22) as he had known through another great authority on the subject, Kīrtidhara. What A.G. himself explained in elaboration in the 5th chap. was what he himself was acquainted with.

(vii)After giving the diverse movements of the body from head to foot, their symbolism and purposes, for the representation in chaps 4-13, Bharata deals with those aspects of Abhinayas not covered in the earlier chaps. in the 22nd under Sāmānyābhinaya. These are contexts like the delineation of the five sense-organs, touch, form, taste, smell and sound. A further appendix of miscellaneous depiction is given in chap. 25 under Citrābhinaya. In chap. 25 we have the prescriptions for the depiction of the seasons, sunshine, lightning etc. Towards the close of this chap. A.G. provides the useful information that Bharata gave all these details under Sāmānya and Citra abhinaya-s, giving due regard for the school of thought followed by the prevailing practitioners (G.O.S.III,p.287).

What is more important in this context, A.G. adds here 38 Anuṣṭubh verses of his own (Ibid.,pp.287-91) containing very valuable information about the different appropriate abhinayas to be performed in representing divinities, animals, natural scenery, activities of human beings etc. For, Citra-abhinaya is the clever improvisation and combination of the manifold abhinayas set forth in the earlier chaps. of the N.Ś. (p.291)

A.G. has taken the trouble to suggest the different abhinayas for many categories of objects according to his knowledge of and experience in the field. This long enumeration was done by him only because of his intense desire that the practical sampradāya may be continued and preserved :

ततश्चोदाहरणार्थान् दर्शयामो मा भूत् संप्रदायप्रवाहविच्छेद इति।

And that this extra information may provide the inclination to imaginative and intelligent followers of the tradition for further improvisation.

(viii) In the IVth chap. on Karaṇas A.G. has given the practical application of each of them. Since the Karaṇas are meant for the entry or the movement on the stage of a particular character under specific circumstances, A.G. has indicated the situation suited for the 108 Karaṇas, along with some citations from dramas. Unfortunately the citations are all brief and mostly in Prākrit and hence there is great difficulty in identifying them. I am giving below some samples of Karaṇas with their practical uses as given by A.G.

Vartita, 2nd Karaṇa	In denoting the Vāyārtha-abhinaya of jealousy the Patāka hand-pose in it must be upturned.

	In denoting the Vākyārtha-abhinaya of anger the Patāka hand-pose must be facing down.
Samanakha, 5th Karaṇa	At the first entry on the stage for performing Nṛtta.
Līna, 6th Karaṇa	In the context of a lover beseaching his beloved.
Nikuñcita, 26th Karaṇa	To indicate contemplation, or person like Hanumān about to move in the sky.
Catura, 39th Karaṇa	When Vidūṣaka wants to show his wonder or when he does the Sūcyābhinaya
Lalāṭatilaka, 56th Karaṇa	For the movement of Vidyādharas
Talavilasita, 56th Karaṇa	Because this Karaṇa involves the lifting up of one leg, Nāṭyācāryas use this for the entry of Sūtradhāra and others.

(ix) Regarding the hand-movements N.Ś. IX 173 prescribes that they should be minimal and dignified with reference to superior characters and situations; somewhat greater and pointed in the case of context of middling characters and situations; and varied and conspicuous when low characters are involved. A.G. records here the different interpretations of this verse as known to him (G.O.S. II,pp.67-8) and finally gives what is the best explanation according to himself. A.G. feels that in situations full of emotional feelings - as for example when Śakuntalā after her repudiation in Hastināpura, meets Duṣyanta in the lovely sites in the vicinity of Mārīca's hermitage and speaks to herself in emotional overtones - 'O my heart, be consoled, fate has indeed given up its evil intention and is favouring me. This is indeed my lord'. Or the context of Purūravas in the IVth act, when after getting the gem of reunion by the grace of Moon, he looks at a beautiful creeper near by, imagines it to be his own belovd Urvaśī who has spurned and left him, and pours forth his heart in the classic well known verse-Tanvī meghajalārdrapallavatayā etc. Such situations as these, full of Sāttvika-bhāvas are excellent (Jyeṣṭha) and the happenings are related to the person himself (आत्मज्ञस्थ-विषय). In these cases the hand-movements should be absolutely minimal (Ibid., p. 68)

Those situations in which the experience is not related to the speaker and also the happenings of the event are not actual, the scope for Sāttvika is extremely limited. In these inferior contexts the hand-movements should be exaggerated and varied. For example, in the play Tāpasavatsarāja (Act V) where Kuñjaraka describes the fight between the armies of Pradyota and Darśaka. There are again middling contexts where characters like Vidūṣaka describe a garden or a city. Although the character is himself a participant in the event, still the actions performed in this case should be more pronounced and explicit.

(x) I do not want to enumerate more instances under this category nor their elaboration. Suffice to point out that not only under movements related to the different limbs of the body and parts of the face called Aṅga, Pratyaṅga and Upāṅga, but also under the total composite category called 'Śākhā' (or branch of a tree) and instances of depiction of interludes, Dhruvā songs, or a play within a play called technically as 'Nāṭyāyita' A.G. cites profuesely from Rūpakas and Uparūpakas. Time and again, A.G. emphasises the importance in the theme, gestures and movements, fullness of Sattva or Sāttvikabhāva which is the very essence and life of Nāṭya. The combined effects of bodily and emotional representation, along with the make-up, voice and saṅgīta is to provide unalloyed, aesthetic, bliss (rasa) to the cultured and discriminating audience (sahṛdaya), and joy to the common man.

Bharata no doubt is the compiler and originator of the vast and encyclopaedic information regarding all the facets of Dance and also of Sanskrit Drama called by him variously as Nāṭya, Prayoga, Rūpaka, Dṛṣya etc. The varied materials are all given in a prescriptive manner and in a general way. A.G. on the other hand, as a commentator with profound knowledge and understanding of the dramatic principles enunciated by Bharata and with great interest in the practical side, explains the prescriptive information with specific illustrations drawn from varied sources. Hence it was considered pertinent to deal firstly with the unique technical principles of Bharata, not by themselves, but as enunciated by A.G.

Bharata on living Sanskrit theatre : It is noteworthy that besides prescriptions for producing and enacting different types of Sanskrit drama, Bharata speaks of the dramatic troups, the assignment of roles, competitions of dramas; he also deals with the the ideal response of the audience to a successful production and dramatic competitions.

Bharata opens chap. 27 with the the statement that 'a performance is given with the intention of meeting with success.'

यस्मात् प्रयोगः सर्वोऽयं सिध्यर्थं संप्रदर्शितः ।

Further he speaks about the reaction of the audience. When a performance succeeds, the performers draw from the audience appreciation and admiration ranging from smiles and laughter to exclamations of 'wonderful, 'well done,' and 'how sad'. Spectators register their appreciation physically by shivering with joy, rising from their seats spontaneously, and by offering presents to the performers. The spectator moves with the actor and becomes one with him, whether it is joy or sorrow that is being depicted. He who can become dejected when the actor shows dejection, is happy when the actor shows happiness, is sorrowful when sorrow is depicted, he indeed is the ideal spectator (27.42). It is from this observation of Bharata that the concept of Sahṛdaya developed, the spectator of a drama being a person of 'one heart' with the playwright and his character.

There were dramatic contests at which prizes were awarded by judges (prāśnika). Bharata lists a number of points on which the judges were to award plus or minus marks in reaching their decision. Lapses in performance of many kinds were to be marked down as faults or vulnerable points (ghāta). Lack of concentration, speaking the words of another character, inappropriateness to the role, lapses of memory, and falling out of character-were failures on the part of the actor. Scenery-falling, faults in the spoken word, grammatical and other language-errors, mistakes of delivery, flaws in the music, improper qualities of voice, lack of imagination and resourcefulness, and defective make-up were other faults to be noted. Bharata says it should be reckoned a fault if the playwright or producer introduces into the play portions of a different play. The dramatic composition chosen must be in clear and simple language that can be followed by an audience composed of all classes of people; the drama is no place for a show of pendantry. Variety is essence of the world and as much as possible, dramatists and performers should try to satisfy all expectations. However, tastes of spectators differ and every type of play cannot appeal to every type of spectator. For this reason too, the panel of judges should represent all arts and branches of knowledge and skills comprehended in theatre. They should be free from prejudice and partiality. Judgement of a play's success should arise from those who sympathetically respond to a particular type of plays or to particular parts or aspects of a play.

In judging a play, the following points of merit are to be taken into account; all round effect; harmony and proportion of the several components of the performance; sweetness or appeal of physical action; delivery of speech; appropriateness of the actors to their roles and acting according to the nature of the character; and, last and highest, rasa, or the effective portrayal of emotions. Excellence depends on these factors.

In the penultimate chap. of his N.Ś. Bharata gives instresting information about the dramatic troupe, actors and other artists. First he speaks of the troupe manager or stage manager (sūtradhāra) whose knowledge must cover every aspect of drama and theatre, and his assistant (pāripārśvaka) who must be equally versatile. The leading actress must be an expert in music and drama, in addition to other subjects. The hero is called nāyaka, because he leads and takes the performance to a successful completion with his all-round ability. An actor is called naṭa; the word 'naṭ' refers to dance and representation of the activities of the world through actions and their accompanying emotions. Actors whose features match the roles are chosen to play dwarfs and odd-looking persons. Lean, poorly dressed, and unprepossessing actors should play servants, a humorous person a comic part and so on. High, middle or low, whatever kind of character or age, the actor chosen should correspond by nature to that class and age group. The actor should have the capacity to identify himself with the character he has to portray (35.14, Kasi ed.). If the actor is the king, so he becomes. While it is best when by age and appearance an actor is in accord with the nature of the character he is to play, the polished portrayal of emotions comes only through maturity and diligent training. The conductor of the orchestra (taurika) should have knowledge of all aspects of music. Then there is the team of stage technicians including artisans, painters, designers, make-up men, tailors, jewellers, garland-makers, laundry-men and players of diverse musical instruments (kuśīlava).

Kuṭṭanīmata on the presentation of the play according to N.Ś.

As seen above we have scant information on the theory and practice of Nāṭya from the first few centuries. Things become clearer from the 8th century onwards. This was a glorious period of renaissance in the study and practice of Saṅgīta and Nāṭya, especially in the North-West region, as is evident from A.Bh. and other sources. King Jayāpīḍa (751-782 A.D.) of Kashmir is to be specially mentioned in this connection as a lover and patron of fine arts. His sabhāpati Udbhaṭa wrote the first commentary on the N.Ś. Another minister of his, Dāmodaragupta, wrote the unique kāvya work Kuṭṭanīmata in 1,000 āryās on the culture and mode of life of a courtesan. This kāvya deserves special notice in the present context, for it contains a detailed description (vv. 800-807, 879-928) of the abhinaya for the first act of King Harṣa's play Ratnāvali performed by an all-female troupe.

The context for such a presentation is also given by Dāmodaragupta. A prince called Samarabhaṭa came to Banaras on a pilgrimage. He is curious to witness the staging of the classical drama Ratnāvali of King Harṣavardhana, and hence meets a dance-master. The latter informs the prince of a troupe consisting wholly of actresses who play both the male and female roles. The dance-master's chief pupil is Mañjarī who plays the title role. In the course of praising her art, the teacher refers to the essential qualities and components of acting : effort and training; natural beauty; skill in different poses and grace of movement; proper intonation of the words of the text; nourishment of rasa that must be conveyed with concentration; identification with the feelings portrayed and the manifestation of the voluntary physical reactions of those feelings (sattva), which earlier the teacher emphasized as the most essential thing in acting; gestures of the hands with the approapriate turns of the arms and many other points. Expert actress that Mañjarī is, she can remove completely from the hearts of the spectators the sense of duality, the character versus the actor, and elicit their exclamation of admiration. While some actions may be common to the pangs of separation in love and actual pathos, she can, with her skill, show the subtle distinction between the two states (vv. 803-09).

Then the actual presentation of the opening act of Ratnāvali with Mañjarī and other actresses begins. The poem describes the setting of the whole orchestra, the entry of the stage-manager to the music of the flute and songs relating to his entry (prāveśikī dhruvā), the other types of songs (dhruvā) and the introduction of the play. It then brings on the characters of the main act-minister Yaugandharāyaṇa and king Udayana-to witness the spring festival going on in the grounds below. It follows the action of the act step by step. The main and attendant feelings (bhāva) to be portrayed by the different actors are mentioned. Then the explanation of how the festival is to be portrayed by the actors through improvisations of several amorous acts is given. As we read further, we find instructions for the actor on how the text written by the dramatist was to be integrated with music and dance, and how a passage or verse was to be interpreted. Two maids of the place enter dancing and recite a verse about the god of love hitting with his flower-arrows the hearts of lovers already made soft by the spring season. How this is to be rendered in hand gestures and poses of the limbs is set forth. Then the king, looking on and enjoying the dance of the maids in a spirit of abandon, praises them in a verse of his own. That the actor playing the king's role is to interpret this verse and bring out its meaning through improvisation, reveals a most important aspect of how the art of acting (abhinaya) functions in Indian drama. The maids are then said to exit behind the curtain and when queen Vāsavadattā enters with her retinue, the curtain is said to be removed. At the end of the act, the King, along with others, is said to leave the stage to the exit-song, naiṣkrāmikī dhruvā.[1]

In a further series of observations that follows, the essentials of the performance are emphasized; the music and its elements and qualities; the soft and the vigorous tempos and styles; musical instruments and rhythm; the delivery of speeches in Sanskrit and Prākṛt with appropriate pitch, intonation, and clarity; the nature of the characters portrayed, their emotional states, their make-up, their acting; and the well-knit plot. A practical realization of the Nāṭyaśāstra is to be seen here.

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[1] cf. Dr. V. Raghavan, 'Sanskrit Drama in performance'. Sanskrit Drama in Performance, Ed. Rachel Van M. Baumer and James R. Brandon. Hawaii, Honolulu. 1981.

Production and Acting technique from Dramas and their commentaries

The prescriptions of Bharata including the four types of Abhinayas are mostly carried out by well known ancient classical drama writers like Kālidāsa, Śūdraka, King Harshavardhana and Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa. The explanations of commentators-like Kāṭaya Vema, Jagaddhara and Rāghava Bhaṭṭa, who were specialistas in Drama tradition and Saṅgita-of crucial stage directions in the dramas like nāṭayitvā, rūpayitvā and parikramya, endorse the fact of the composers of Dramas following the technicalities as required. They also clearly bring out the highlights of the production and acting technique, as well as the unique theatre in which the dramas were presented.

We can now see some contexts, especially the stage directions in Kālidāsa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam and their explanations by the commentator Rāghava Bhaṭṭa and find out what light they throw on the ancient Sanskrit drama tradition.

I. in the beginning of Act I king Dusyanta and his party are coming in a chariot on a hunting expedition. From the stage directions 'ratha-vegam nirūpya (acts travelling in a fast moving car) and 'iti śarasandhānam nāṭayati' (gesticulates fixing the arrow in the bow), it is clear that there was no actual chariot used as stage-property, nor did the king have the paraphernalia for the hunt like bow, arrows etc. The charioteer represents by the 'abhinaya' of the hand, the speeding of the chariot. This is done with the hands in a Khaṭakāmukha position, which, together with the legs in a riding position and the motions of the hands, shows the act of riding and holding the reins of the horses. Then, when the king tells the charioteer, 'look at the deer now being shot down dead' (सूत पश्यैनं व्यापाद्यमानं) the stage-direction, "acts out fixing an arrow to his bowstring" (iti śarasandhānam nāṭayati) is added. Thus the king acts out the shooting. This is done with the left hand in the 'muṣṭi' pose, holding the bow, and the Khaṭakāmukha on the right hand, drawing the bowstring. The movement of riding, moving fast, getting in and alighting from the chariot, must all have been shown only by appropriate gestures.

II. In the same act the heroine Śakuntalā and her friends do not carry pots to water the trees. These actions are done only by mime. The stage-directions are— "vṛkṣa-secanam rūpayati" (acts watering the trees), 'kalaśam āvarjayati' (empties the pots) etc. The commentator Rāghava Bhaṭṭa (Printed, N.S. Press) further explains how these delicate actions are to be performed. Accordingly the hands are first to be kept in Nalinīpadmakośa pose, and taken to the shoulder level, to show the pot being placed there. Then with the head and the whole body bent slightly, the hands in Nalinīpadmakośa are brought down and used in such a manner as to depict the watering of trees.

III. In the love scene (Act III) Duṣyanta desires to lift up the face of Śakuntalā -मुखमस्याः समुन्नमयितुमिच्छति According to the commentator (p.109) this lifting is done by the pointed and middle fingers in the hand-pose of Tripatāka : समुन्नमयितुमिति त्रिपताकस्योत्तानाभ्यां मध्यमातर्जनीभ्यां चिबुकदेशगताभ्यामिति। In response to Duṣyanta's desire Śakuntalā, like a true 'mugdhā', avoids her lover's advance– शकुन्तला परिहरति नाट्येन। Rāghava Bhaṭṭa (p. 109) specifies Śakuntalā's action as turning her face away and covering her lips.

नाट्येनेति परावृत्तेन शिरसा विनिगूहितेन अधरेण।

IV. The forest-divinities graciously confer on Śakuntalā their blessings by giving her silken garments, ornaments, lac-dye etc. Anasūyā and Priyaṃvadā decorate their dear friend just by gesticulation· नाट्येन प्रसाधयतः; for the decorations are not actually available. Rāghava Bhaṭṭa carefully describes the poses by which the make-up is to be performed. According to him, the 'tilaka' mark on the forehead is to be done by the ring finger of the Tripatāka hand-pose तिलकं त्रिपताकानामिकया; the putting on of the pair of studs by Pārśvamukha-sandaṃśa of the two hands तालपत्रद्वयं पाशर्वमुखसंदशाभ्याम्; ear-ornaments with the string connecting the lower and upper ear by the two hands in Bhramara-pose; the red lac-dye is to be applied with Kartarīmukha hasta अलक्तकेन पादरञ्जनं कर्तरीमुखेन, and the wearing of rings by the hand in Hamsāsya-pose ऊर्मिकापरिधापनं हंसास्येन।

The above are some charming physical movements to be performed by the actor with some identification of the situation. There are of course contexts which involve a good amount of concentration and feelingful interpretation with more intricate details. For example, in the third act of the play, the friends Anasūyā and Priyaṃvadā, seeing the pining Śakuntalā, suggest that she may compose a love letter to be sent to the king, making known her inner mental state. This is a tense situation in which the young Śakuntalā, who is as innocent as the deer and young plants in the hermitage of Kaṇva with whom she has been brought up, is asked to compose a love-song suited to her temperament to be sent to her lover, king Duṣyanta, adept in matters of love. While thinking of a suitable message to her lover Śakuntalā, with her raised and arched eye-brow, and with the horripilated cheek, reveals her deep love for him.

उन्नमितैकभ्रूलतमाननमस्याः पदानि रचयन्त्याः ।
कण्टकितेन प्रथयति मय्यनुरागं कपोलेन ॥

In her message she says -

"I do not know your heart. But, Oh merciless one, Love severely tortures day and night, my limbs which are (all) fixed in desire on you".

तव न जाने हृदयं मम पुनः कामो दिवापि रात्रावपि ।
निर्घृण, तपति बलीयस्त्वयि वृत्तमनोरथान्यङ्गानि ॥

According to Bharata's prescription, in such contexts are to be shown series of actions with the different parts of the body, the action growing like the branch of a tree, one leading on to another. Hence it is called metaphorically, "branch" (śākhā).

The action of parts of the face is called, following the same imagery, "sprout" (aṅkura), when with the spoken words imbedded within oneself like seeds, the actions show themselves above as sprouts on different parts of the face. Sometimes, action precedes the words and indicates or paves the way for the coming words; in this case, the facial expression is called advance indication (sūcā).

In rendering this verse the actor-artist is expected to interpret not only the total sentence-idea and import, but also to bring out its implication and complementary ideas, suggesting and enriching it by his imaginative interpretation.

That the words used and the total meaning in this apparently simple verse are significant, appropriate to and suggestive in the context is explained by Rāghava Bhaṭṭa at great detail (pp. 101-2). For example, the terms 'nirghṛṇa', 'tapati', the plural in 'aṅgāni' etc.

Duṣyanta as a matured and chivalrous lover, understood surely all the implications in Śākuntalā's love-message. For, on hearing the song from his hiding place in the bower, the king comes out and says taking the cue word 'tapati' of Śankuntalā-

"Cupid torments you, slender girl, but he thoroughly consumes me"

तपति तनुगात्रि, मदनस्त्वामनिशं, मां पुनर्दहत्येव ।

Uniquencess of Dramatic Text

It is clear from the above that the theory, technique, and aesthetics of the Sanskrit Drama as set forth in Bharata's Nāṭya-Śāstra can be seen and understood actually by going through carefully the texts of ancient dramas and their commentaries. As seen in the few contexts of Kālidāsa's Śākuntalam stage properties were completely dispensed with. Instead, appropriate stylistic actions were artistically employed, as suited to the dramatic text and contexts.

In a similar way scenic settings for depicting the various locations were not used. The different locations, entry and exit of various characters in diverse moods, etc. are graphically described in the dramatic text itself, in prose or verse. For example in act I of Śākuntalam when Duṣyanṭa approaches the hermitage of sage Kaṇva, he says - "these are certainly the gounds of the hermitage". He then goes on to describe the several signs and characteristics of the sage's dwelling and its environs. When during the reciting or musical rendering of this descriptive verse he interprets the ideas in it with gestures, elaborating them and reinforcing them with appropriate complimentary ideas, the whole picture begins to live before the mind's eye of the spectator more vividly than a painted curtain. In this sort of presentation the spectator and the actor participate in a highly concentrated art which calls forth the utmost attention and absorption on both sides. Together with the song and music of instruments on which the movement of the actor was set, this kind of enactment made the drama really an art of dance-drama.

What was said of scene, character and action, applies even more to the presentation of feelings, the subtle play of which in a character, evokes the minute observation and description of the other related character on the stage who is deeply affected by it. The verses of Duṣyanta in act I giving those memorable pictures of Śakuntalā, Sarasijam anuviddham, then Calāpāṅgām dṛṣṭim when she is harassed by the bee, then Srastāṁsau, depicting the strain on her limbs caused by watering the trees, attain special significance when we understand their role in the enactment of the play. Rightly does Dr. Henry W. Wells (p.110, The Classical Drama of India), in the chapter on Theatrical technique of the Sanskrit Stage says - "This was at once an intense literary theatre and an intensely choreographic theatre, combining the greatest possible attraction for both ear and eye."

Ancient Indian Theatre. It is obvious that the Sanskrit Drama tradition is distinct in its concept and conventions regarding the dramatic text providing for the suitable physical and emotive actions, the time and space of such actions, the moods of characters etc. Naturally it requires a suitable theatre for its presentation. The dramaturgical and śilpa texts, and also the dramas themselves, describe the ancient theatre.[1] It is known from these texts that there were well planned and well built theatres in the palaces and temples called as Prekṣāgāra (प्रेक्षागार), Nāṭyaśālā, Raṅgamandapam, and as Kūttambalam (in Kerala). The theatrs were of varying sizes and shapes, and, those in the palaces were elaborately designed.

Bharata's N.Ś (chap. II) speaks of three types of theatre differing in size and shape. Bharata himself prefers the rectangular middle-sized theatre called Vikṛṣṭa as most suitable for Nāṭakas and Prakaraṇas. It measures 64 x 32 hastas (1 hasta being equal to 1′6″). This entire space is divided into two equal parts, namely the stage-area (Raṅga-maṇḍapa) and the auditorium (Prekṣaka-niveśana).

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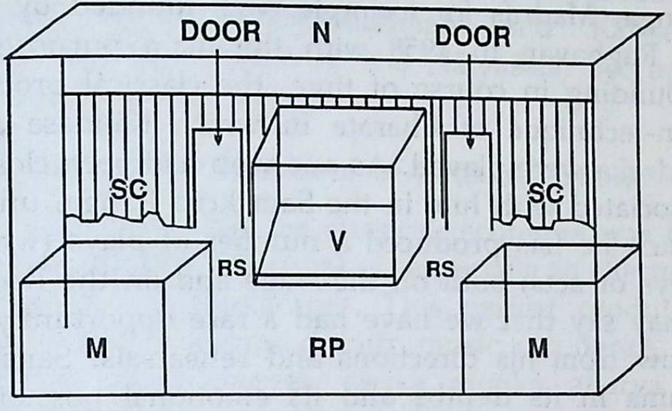
[1] Theatre Arctitecture in Ancient India, Dr. V. Raghavan.

The concerned verses in N.Ś. are not clear in some contexts, wherein the interpretations also differ. However the following description is generally agreed upon. The Raṅgamaṇḍapa is divided into two parts, namely the acting area (raṅga) and the dressing room (nepathya). The back part of the stage of the nepathya-side is called Ranga-śīrsha (RS) and the front portion is alled the Raṅgapīṭha (RP). The RS is backed by a wall separating the RS and nepathya. In this back wall, there are two doors for entries and exits of the characters. And between the two doors is a square platform for the kutapa (orchestra), measuring 8h. RP (in front of RS) measuring 32h x 8h, is in three sections naturally formed because of the pillars on the stage. The central portion measures 16h x 8h and on its either side are two square areas, each measuring 8h and having one pillar in each of its four corners. These side-areas are called the Mattavāraṇī (M). The Mattavāraṇī has a separate name because it is separated from the central main acting area of the RP by the pillars and it forms the supplementary acting area. These three are the main acting areas, as they face the audience directly. Bharata mentions two curtains, namely Yavanikā and Paṭa (or Apaṭī). The latter is on each of the two doors in the wall separating the Raṅga and the Nepathya.

For details of the stage see the drawing below. This structure was designed by Mr. Goverdhan S. Panchal for the Samaskrita Ranga, Madras and his own troupe at Ahmedabad.

SIMPLIFIED STAGE OF BHARATA
(Not according to measurements)



C. Back Curtain of Theatre

N. Nepathya (make-up room)

SC. Special Curtain (to cover up entry and exit)

Doors (2) with Curtains and wall-for entry and exit

V. Vedikā (central platform meant for Kutapa or orchestra)

RS. Raṅgaśīrṣa (rear stage)

M. Mattavāraṇīs (2) (supplementary acting areas)

RP. Raṅgapīṭha (main acting area)

Samskrita Ranga, at Madras

Enough has been said about the antiquity, continuity till the modern times with some flexibility, and production technique of the ancient Sanskrit Drama tradition. Of course, the theatre and production of rūpakas as envisaged and prescribed by Bharata in his N.Ś. are not available in any part of India. The resuscitation of this tradition is indeed a very difficult task. But it is heartening to note that efforts have been, and are still being continued, to bring out the subtleties and potentiality of this rich tradition. The Samskrita Ranga, Madras for example, was founded by Dr. V. Raghavan in 1958 with the main purpose of rebuilding in course of time, the classical production-technique of Bharata in which Kālidāsa and Śūdraka were played. As one who had been closely associated with him in the Samskrita Ranga, under which he has produced a number of plays (whole plays or acts) both on the stage and on the Radio, I may say that we have had a rare opportunity to know from his directions and rehearsals, Sanskrit drama in its depths and its emotional possibility and acting potentiality. No doubt he has expounded in his papers on Sanskrit Drama the highlights and technique and subtleties of the production according to the Nāṭya Śāstra, but it is in directing these plays for us that he has shown us the practical application of these principles. We have learnt a good deal of this technique and its aesthetics and while conceding to the prevailing notions and tastes of the drama-seeing public, we have embodie several ideas of this classical idiom. We have learnt also the practical implications of the theory of Rasa, of Sthāyin and Sañchārins, of how the dialogue of a master like Kālidāsa cannot be meddled with, without harming the principles of Rasa and how abridgment of his plays require great knowledge and skill.

It has been my good fortune, that at my request Sri Goverdhan Panchal has prepared for the Samskrita Ranga in 1989 the symbolic Nāṭyaśālā as based on Bharata's prescriptions. It was a privilege for me to have produced with the assistance of Dr. Raghavan's daughter Smt. Nandini Ramani, three plays, Bhāsa's Svapnavāsavadatta, Śaktibhadra's Āścaryacūḍāmani and Kālidāsa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam in the Nāṭyaśālā, set up in the proscenium stage.

Contemporary Relevance of Sanskrit Drama

It is clear that the classical technique was fully represented in the rūpakas, especially in the major Nāṭakas and Prakaraṇas. This perfect production and action, intergrated with music and dance, and all the four abhinayas, vācika, angika, aharya and sattvika-are not actually available.

However the continuity of this technique in some form as related to Bharata's N.Ś. could be seen in the evolution of present-day stage representations. It is noteworthy that the Sanskrit theatre was growing. Writers and artists went on experimenting and developing new forms. Some play-forms popular among the folk were taken, refined, refashioned and fitted into the classical technique and framework. At one stage these were codified into a class called uparūpaka or secondary play-forms. The chief characteristic of this production was the prominence given to music and dance. In most cases their stories were composed as songs and they featured only one actress or dancer. Thus they are to be considered more as dances than as dramas. These uparūpakas passed on to the regional dance-dramas, in Sanskrit-cum-local language and pure local languages like the Ankia Nātya, Yakshaganas, Bhāgavata Nāṭkas and Kathakali. It is these last-mentioned that have preserved the tradition and genius of the indigenous theatre, and supplied the materials, means and methods for all pioneers in modern times to revive and re-create an Indian theatre in authentic style.

Sanskrit Drama has indeed played a very significant role in the history of Indian culture. It has been continuousy effective through the centuries as a force for consolidation of aesthetic, spiritual, religious and moral culture.

Outside India too, from the time of the spread to the West of Kālidāsa's Śākuntalam, the Sanskrit Drama has attracted the attention of poets like Goethe, Theatre specialists like Dr. and Mrs. Clifford jones, and Dr. Henry W.Wells. Adaptations of dramas like Śākuntalam, Svapnavāsavadatta and Mricchakatika have been presented on the stage in different places in Europe, Russia and U.S.A. For the restlessly searching playarights and producers Bharata and Kālidāsa have probably something deep and true to offer fresh.

There seems to be some interest now in the West for a proper understanding of Sanskrit dramatic tradition. It was given to the University of Hawaii to organise a useful seminar in the spring of 1972 on 'Sanskrit Drama in performance' and also to publish its valuable proceedings in 1981 . Any academic and artistic centre in India and elsewhere interested in ancient theatre has necessarily to study the Sanskrit theatre in theory and practice. The codification of the Nātya-śāstra and its valuable commentries, especially the profound A. Bh have contributed to the evolution of common ethos and aesthetic norm among the entire subcontinent. It may not be an exaggeration to say that the principles laid down in NŚ. are universal and can appeal to the taste of any time and clime. During the last few years efforts are rightly being made in some centres in India for bringing out critical studies of the NŚ. or of better editions of the same with A.Bh. It will be also useful to carefully resuscitate the practical sampradāya as well, coordinating the rich material availabe in the classical commentaries of Dramas, as those by Jagaddhara, Kāṭayavema and Rāghava Bhatta, along with the traditions recorded in the A.Bh. This re-appraisal and analysis will provide the correct perspective for the present-day classical dance and drama traditions as well.

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elsewhere interested in ancient theatre has necessarily to study the Sanskrit theatre in theory and practice. The re-valuation of the Nāṭya-śāstra and its valuable commentaries, especially the profound A.Bh. have contributed to the evolution of common ethos and aesthetic norm among the entire Asian continent. It may not be an exaggeration to say that the principles laid down in NS are universal and can appeal to the taste of any time and clime. During the last few years efforts are rapidly being made in some centres in India for bringing out critical studies of the NS, or a better edition of the same with A.Bh. It will be also useful to carefully resuscitate the practical sampradāya as well, coordinating the rich material available in the classical commentaries of Dramas, as those by Jagaddhara, Kāṭayavema and Rāghava Bhaṭṭa, along with the traditions recorded till the A.Bh. This re-appraisal and analysis will provide the correct perspective for the present-day classical dance and drama traditions as well.

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